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# D E R W E N T;


OR,

## RECOLLECTIONS

OF

### YOUNG LIFE IN THE COUNTRY.

By JOHN CHESTER.



77

The scenes of my early life have crept into my mind  
like breezes blown from the Spice Islands.

COLERIDGE.

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CHILDHOOD and youth are to age a storehouse of memories. All the incidents and feelings of our young life—our pastimes, our haps and mishaps, our reveries, our penchants, our schools and schoolmates, our attachments and dislikes, the characters we note and study, the manners and customs of the time—all these and many more things, impress themselves so deeply on the memory, that they never perish from it. If, during the busy period of middle life, they are lost sight of for the time, yet in the evening of our days, they reappear with great distinctness, and are often adverted to, if not habitually dwelt on.

It would not be of much interest to the reader to know how many years have passed over the writer of these sketches. My memory goes back distinctly to the beginning of this century, and a little way, faintly, into the last; how far, I cannot say; for who can tell which is the very earliest of the things he can remember? I can return, in thought, along the pathway of my life,

through sunshine and shade, till, arriving at limits undefined and visionary, I seem to lose myself in the light of a cloudless morning.

I shall ever think myself most fortunate in having been brought up in the country, and on a farm. Around me, in my childhood, were green fields, almost elysian in my young eyes, sparkling waters, musical cascades and brooks, lights and shadows, old groves, ravines, pathless woods—all the poetry of nature. To these advantages were added the wholesome industries of farm life, kind neighbors, good examples, and the absence of the peculiar temptations of cities.

It is of young life in such circumstances that these pages speak. They comprise a miscellany of sketches and reflections intended for the young or the old, and such as any one whose early life is, or was, in the country, may make in some degree his own; and where the writer himself appears in them, it is not with any autobiographical intent, but only because he finds it easier to use the first person than the third.

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I.

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DERWENT.



## DERWENT.

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DERWENT was one of the four parishes in the broad old township of Fenwick. It is a town now ; but I love best to remember it as a parish. That term best suits its old-time history.

It was a rural, cheerful district everywhere, with much of the picturesque in places,—dells, rocks, brooks, woods, sightly hill-tops, and pleasant meadows.

The Derwent waters were pleasing features of the place. There was the broad Connecticut in front. That shall have a separate notice bye and bye. There were the Derwent and the Little Derwent, tributaries to the Connecticut. It is remarkable that streams will never run straight, if they can help it. Among hills they must run crooked, taking such courses as the valleys open to them ; but they will cut for themselves serpentine channels through the softest flat mea-

dows, and often, shifting ones, as though some freak, or whim, possessed them. That was the way of the Derwent; a vessel following its windings, through bush and meadow, would be long under your eye, if you watched it,—its sails now filled, and now flapping, as the humors of the stream made the wind fair or foul for it.

The Little Derwent was a pretty stream, reaching inland a mile or more, ebbing and flooding with the river tides to that extent, beyond which it became a brook. Wild ducks and other water fowl delighted in its broad marshes. Cranberries grew in these spontaneously, not in any quantity for the market, but enough of them to pay you for a wet foot, if a handful or two would satisfy you. The sachem-pea also grew there, whose large, velvety leaf you could not wet, the water rolling off from it as it does from a waterfowl's breast.

Pigeon Pond, in the northern part of the parish, was a deep, round, brimming basin, of the purest, coldest water. There was good reason for its pureness and coldness; it was fed by springs only, from underneath it,—satisfied from itself, as Solomon says a good man is. Though there was no stream running into it, there was a copious

one, large enough for a considerable water-power, flowing out of it. Wurts's grist-mill, which was one of the "seven wonders" of my childhood, was worked by this stream. What was singular about this lakelet was, that being on high ground, with no hills, or higher grounds, sending streams into it, it got nothing from the rains except the drops that fell on its bosom; and yet it was always full and out-flowing. Its circumference might be half a mile.

This little water was attractive to me, as all waters are to boys; and I loved it for reasons such as a young mind oftener feels than analyzes, its beauty, its solitude, its stillness, and the images it mirrored,—clouds, birds, overhanging trees. And perhaps, also, I had some kindly regard for the only craft that floated on it,—a weather-blackened, oarless old canoe, looking as lone as the Ark does in a picture.

You would find fishes there, too, if you were fond of angling; and they were of the best kinds for the frying-pan,—perch, roach, pickerel, with none of the refuse sorts, such as dace and bull-heads. The pond appeared to be full of them. My cousin Isaac Waldron and I, half-grown boys then, coming home that way from our ramblings

in the woods behind it, after game, sat down there to rest and talk, and having our hooks with us, soon caught as many as we cared to carry, with our birds and squirrels. How came the fish to be there? Curious people often asked and wondered how. No one knew. The Indians could not have put them there, they thought, their means and habits being what they were. There was, however, no great mystery in the case; some curious or thoughtful early settler, brought their progenitors from the river in a bucket, and colonized them, a little piscatory settlement, in the midst of woods and Indians; and from that it had grown to this.

The other lake, called Beaver Lake, was in the western half of the parish. We called that the Lakeside, and the people living there Lakesiders. This was a larger water than Pigeon Pond, being a mile and a half, or more perhaps, in circumference. There were a few dwellings along its western margin, looking complacently out on it, and less complacently, I should think, across it, on a sloping wooded ridge that limited their view, and had no compensating beauty. An old chronicler says of this "Pond," as he too diminutively calls it, that it is "remarkable for its being formed

by a dam, sufficiently wide for a cart-path, which was apparently made by beavers." Famous builders, truly, are the beavers. There was another of their structures, on a large brook not far from us, which was named the Beaver Mill-Dam, some man having once set up a small saw-mill on it. The man and mill passed away, and were forgotten, while the beavers' work and name became permanently connected with the locality. I feel some satisfaction in making this record of the curious and useful labors both of these and those others which made the dam at the foot of the lake. An opportune service, this was, for the first settlers there ; for the beaver-built causeway which they found ready for them, just separated the lake from a swamp of such a character that they would have found it difficult, with their means, to make a road through it. That swamp, of large extent, was filled with cedars, which were so thick, and tall, and dark, that it was said you could not venture far into it without a compass, or a guide, in a cloudy day, but at the risk of not finding your way out of it ; and certainly it had a labyrinthian look.

I never passed it without admiring its countless, lofty, pointed evergreen tops. It is probable

that it was once overflowed by the lake, which still discharges itself into it. The lake was the great bathing-place of the young men and boys of that vicinity. In it grew the longest-stemmed pond lilies that I have ever seen,—a fact which a boy would be likely to remember.

Our old highways had some charms that were peculiar to them. They were rude and rambling, with rarely a level mile, and still less frequently a straight one in them,—running amicably along brook-sides, following their humors, often crossing them on rude timber bridges; asserting their right of way through narrow passes between rocks and hillocks; climbing and descending hills; damaged by the ever-washing rain, and rudely repaired. And so unstinted in their width! One might think that the object of the old proprietors had been to throw as much land into the highways as they could, instead of stealing as much from them as they dared, as some people now do.

Those old, primitive highways!—there will never be any more such. They are antiques, pictures, histories. I see in them the enterprise, the labors, the courage, and the large-heartedness of men making homes for themselves and



their posterity in wilds which were pathless and sunless till they came.

In one of them was a mile of road which is to me the most interesting that my memory recalls. It is that which took me to and from the house of God, and to and from the school, with loving sisters and a kind brother for companions. It is alive, too, in my retrospect, with the images, and merry with the voices, of school-mates and play-fellows;—how many of whom fulfilled their short and uneventful day long since, and are gone.

The reader of a book likes to know something of the place to which it takes him, and this partial sketch of Derwent has been given with reference to such a wish. There are several other localities,—Hemlock Ledge, The Crows' Rest, The Narrows—to which I would invite a friend to go with me, if we were in the place; but topographies, often wearisome, are never satisfactory.

The Derwent people were farmers, most of them. They lived scattered along the roads, with here and there a closer small neighborhood.

The largest of these was at Derwent Head, which was, as the name implies, the head of tide-water on the Derwent, and was our business centre. There were brought and dropped, in grand confusion, great piles of timber, cord-wood, plank, and whatever the woods furnished for ship-yards and the market. Our only factory was the "Anchor Works," a great dingy building, or system of buildings, in the bottom of a valley through which flowed the stream that supplied its water-power. It was something of an adventure, for a young boy, to go down into it, in the evening, to see its glowing forges, and wonder that the anvil's great showers of sparks did not burn the workmen; and it was a delight to listen to its trip-hammer, at a mile's distance, on a still morning. The ship-yards afforded us a fine sensation, now and then, in the sight of a launch.

II.

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OUR HOME.



OUR HOME was on a small elevated plat, facing the river, and somewhat less than a mile from it. We thought the house none the less respectable for being old and having sheltered three generations prior to ours. It was open, on its hill-top site, to all wholesome airs, and its windows glistened in the morning sunbeams while the valleys were yet sleeping in the twilight. If you wish to wake to early and pleasant thoughts, an elevated sleeping-room, with an eastern exposure, is to your purpose. Give late sleepers the shady side, with candles to make up after bed-time for the better hours they lose in the morning.

The well, more than forty feet in depth, was such as hill and rock necessitated. I suspect that my earliest emotions of the sublime were experienced at that well. So dark and deep! I dropped pebbles into it—chick!—to see the water

sparkle and note how long the sound was in coming up to me,—as a child will. Its apparatus for drawing was the crotch, sweep, and pole, the oldest and simplest sort of well-gear in New England, as I think it is in all the first-settled parts of our country. And perhaps it is the best, if you have space and sky-room for it. It keeps the well open to the light and air, which is favorable, if not essential, to its pureness, while the often-dipped bucket stirs the water and keeps it from stagnating. It has a picturesque, as well as a historic interest.

It is peculiarly suggestive. To the traveller on a rural highway, a well-sweep near a house speaks of home and the domestic life more emphatically than does any other object.

Did you ever think of the crotch, sweep, and pole as an original contrivance? When and where was it first used? There is no mention of any fixture at all similar to it in the accounts we have of ancient wells. The common mode appears to have been to draw with a cord and a water-pot, or pitcher, of pottery or metal, that would dip itself. A marble curb, found among the ruins of one of Tiberius's villas, and preserved in the British Museum, shows marks, around its

edges, of the cords with which they drew. "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep," said the woman of Samaria to Jesus at Jacob's well. She herself, undoubtedly, had come provided with a rope, together with her water-pot. Solomon speaks of the wheel broken at the cistern, from which we should suppose that wheels, or windlasses, were more or less in use at wells.

I have not seen the apparatus we are speaking of in foreign countries, and I once thought it might be an invention of the early settlers of America: but it is in fact much older, and has been used more extensively, than I supposed. In a wood-cut of the date of 1518, belonging to an elaborate series entitled "*Triumphs of Maximilian*," by Hans Burgmair, a contemporary of Albert Durer and his rival in the art of design, there is represented a rich embroidered saddle-cloth on which is shown a woman drawing water by her cottage, from a well with a pole, sweep, and bucket, and a rude curb of logs.

The contrivance, by whomsoever it may have been devised, is a thing curious in conception, as well as useful in its working. In drawing water with a pole, the trouble was to keep it straight

up and steady in the air, which it was difficult to do if the well was at all deep, or if there was wind; and its weight, too, in addition to that of the bucket, had to be lifted at arm's length. You wanted a man aloft to help you. But see how these inconveniencies are disposed of by the sweep. It takes charge of the pole, lowers and raises it perpendicularly, and helps you lift just as much as you please to have it, by the weights you put upon its lower end.

And this further may be said for it, that any man can set up the crotch, sweep, and pole for himself, while in many cases, particularly in remote or new settlements, other kinds of gear cannot be had.



III.

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FETCHING FIRE.



HALF-WAY between us and the river, on a lower plat than ours, lived our nearest neighbors, Mr. Crabbe and Mr. Prudden; their houses and farms being on opposite sides of the road which ran down past us to the landing. The Pruddens were agreeable neighbors and good people; the Crabbes were such as we shall see. They were an aged couple, living quite alone. Among my very early recollections is that of an incident connected with my first visit to their house. It may seem trivial; but, as young life, regarded as a whole, includes the life of the child as well as that of youth, we must allow a place to some such memories as this, in a few of the pages that are to follow.

It is a great thing to be a child. For that is to be, more than is possible at any maturer age, a sight-seer and adventurer. In a world as new to him as he is young in it, the little learner finds him-

self surrounded by curiosities and wonders. Every sound, color, shape, and motion, arrests him. This is the secret of his dreams and musings, and his many questions; and this, too, accounts for the distinctness of his subsequent recollections.

I had run down to the old man's, Mr. Crabbe's, with one of the maids, on a bright, frosty morning, to get some fire. Very strange, now, would seem the idea of lending or borrowing fire; but as there were no friction matches in those days, the practice was to keep it on the hearth if possible; and if it chanced to go out, it might be necessary to resort to a neighbor's supply. You imbedded in the ashes, over night, some of the brands or coals, or, if the family had sat up until these were too nearly consumed, you were prepared with a bit of seasoned hickory, or other hard wood, to rake up with remains enough of fire to ignite it. This was a very considerable item of house-keeping care. It required some tact to make sure of success; for, if you buried your brand too deeply, it would be smothered and extinguished; or, if too slightly, it would all burn out and be gone.

It was, in fact, an experiment, and a somewhat critical one, to be repeated nightly. If it failed, as it often would, so that, in the morning, you poked and raked in vain among the ashes for your hid treasure of coals, or for so much as a spark which your breath might kindle into more, or which you could light a match with, then you had to strike fire. You went to some shelf, or cuddy, and took thence a piece of steel shaped so as to be held conveniently, a box or horn of tinder, a gun-flint, and a brimstone match; and you were, of course, provided with a candle. The spark struck from the steel ignited the tinder, the tinder lit the match, the match lit the candle, the candle set ablaze the wood, and so, behold how great a matter a little fire—a red particle of steel—kindled!

If you happened to be out of tinder, or of matches, you must go, then, to a neighbor's for fire; and a later breakfast and keener appetites would be the consequence. So, too, if you wanted a light in the night, you must strike one, or find fire on the hearth; or, these means failing, you must go and wake some neighbor for it,—if light or fire you must have; which would sometimes happen, as in a case of sudden illness.

Vessels at sea, whose tinder became damp, or was spent, would be without light in the binnacle, or fire in the caboose, for the remainder of the passage, unless some spoken ship supplied them. Crews suffered, and sometimes vessels were lost, in these circumstances.

Such were the ways in which our morning fires were set agoing, and our extinct fires renewed; and I have that regard for the steel, and flint, and tinder-box, that I deem them worthy to be preserved as memorials of the olden time. Of what date they are, as an invention, it is beyond history to say; but in old people's memories they are of the days of great fire-places, huge "back-logs," glowing hearths, dipped candles, and rare incendiarisms.

We went, as I was saying, Betty and I, after fire. The old man was just uncovering a plentiful store of coals and brands. I remember how he looked. Gross and heavy, he seemed a Blue-beard in his castle; for his house was a strong-timbered, unfinished, ill-lighted building, and was hung with cobwebs. His uncombed coarse gray hair stood all ways; his beard was equally neglected; he had shaggy brows, ashy eyes, and a

huge fungus-like nose ; and from the condition of his garments you might have thought he had slept in them on a heap of swingling-tow. These were a child's impressions of him, and as I saw him then I see him now. The wife was as untidy as the husband.

"Fire?" said the old man, with a crustiness that made me step backward ; "why don't folks *keep* fire, and not be runnin' to their neighbors after it? Where's your tongs?"

Betty, not at all disconcerted by his manner, said she had not brought any tongs ; a couple of chips would do to carry a coal between, if he had n't a brand for her.

"And so you want a part of my wood-pile, to make you out,—a couple of my big chips, heh? Go out and get 'em then ; but I wish folks would fetch their own chips, or th'else their tongs, if they must be comin' arter fire."

"Just a couple of small chips, as big as clam-hells, or two bits of bark, will do," said Betty. "But there's a nice little brand, there, can't you spare me that, Mr. Crabbe?"

"Here, take it, then ;" and he held out to her, in his tongs, not the brand she meant, but another so hot that she could not touch it, and he knew

•

she could not. "Quick; you're fillin' the house—pff-ff—chuck full of smoke!"

"Thank you, Mr. Crabbe; that'll do nicely," said Betty, with the very perfection of good-nature in her tone. "But please let me take tongs and all just to get out doors with it, and I can manage it then, I guess." And running out with it, she dropped it on the ground, and returned the tongs. Then, getting a piece of turf which a cart-wheel had cut up in the yard, she wrapped it around one end of the burning stick, and so we went smoking homewards.



IV.

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GOING TO MILL.



FIRST THINGS are *memorabilia* with us;—the first sled, or whistle, for example; the first suit of boy's clothes, (with pockets in them!); the first day at school; the first sight of the ocean; of a ship; of a lighthouse; of a burning building. Through repetition, and our growth in years, such things cease to interest us as they did, yet we always continue to remember them as first possessions or experiences.

Among my own First Things was a visit to the mill. Smith Scofield was going with a grist, and as he was starting from the door, the humor took my father to put me up behind him. "There, John," said he; "you may go, too, and learn the way."

Smith Scofield was one of our farm-hands. He was a tallish young man, had a kindly tenor voice, wore light summer working-clothes, and a slouched hat. This is all I remember of him.

"As plain as the way to mill," people say. The way to Wurts's mill was not plain; it was hid away in the fields. At the end of a mile and a half by the highway, you turned right out into a wild of bush pastures and remnants of old woods. This was a new region to me, *terra nova*, and my eyes and ears, in passing through it, were those of an explorer.

There were numerous gates and bars to pass through here, at each of which Smith would let me down by the arm upon the ground, dismount himself, lower and put up the bars, or open and shut the gate, as the case might be, remount and pull me up again into my place; so that it was no small affair for two such travellers to get forward on such a road, with a grist-laden horse. The path was rude and crooked; it had been made only by wheels and hoofs; but its rudeness gave it interest.

We had proceeded half a mile, perhaps, through these fields, following the humor of the path, without seeing the mill, when, at length, a low rumbling, and a "clack, clack," mingled with a dashing sound of water, told us we were near it; and then, passing round a patch of woods that had screened it, "There's the mill," said Smith.

And there it was! I was silent, now, till we came to it. It stood at the foot of a narrow ravine, the natural outlet of a romantic little lake not far behind it, which supplied its working power. Regarded as a building merely, it was, to be sure, but a weather-beaten brown thing; but attached to it, outside, there was a great wheel, revolving very swiftly under a stream of water that came pouring down upon it from a trough above. Such a wheel!—its height, its huge shaft, its wide rim, its many buckets!—I marvelled how they ever got it up, and upright, from the ground, and into its place.

We went in. Smith was careful to have me understand all that was going on there. He showed me the whirling stone that did the grinding betwixt it and a fixed one under it; made me notice how it fed itself with grain just so fast as it wanted it, and no faster, by hitting the hopper and jarring it with its clack, which was a peg fixed in the stone, every time it came round. He called my attention to the long revolving sieve, the bolter, which sifted the flour from the bran; and to the cog-wheels, fitting into each other; and all kept moving and at work by that giant wheel outside. All this, with the rumbling, and

the clacking, and the many bags with grists waiting to be ground, or to be come for, with their owners' names on them, and the flour bedusted floor, and the dusty cobwebs, 'and the dusty miller, made the inside a curious place, and interested me a good deal; but I was soon out again, gazing at the great thing of all, the water-wheel. It made me dizzy to look up at it. I easily imagined it a thing of life; it seemed as if it were shrinking and dodging down from under the rude pouring it all the while got upon it, while the saucy, tireless water made a frolic of its work, letting itself down by the wheel's buckets, (which I tried to count, and could not,) and laughing and bounding away along its stony path.

I have seen, since that day, some of the most famous structures which human hands have built, but I can hardly say I have ever seen any that quite equalled that tremendous, dizzy, toiling overshot wheel. You may smile at this; but remember it is a child's wonder at which you smile, and that things are great, not by measurement in the carpenter's way, by line and rule, but by their effect on the beholder. This is the child's standard for estimating sublimities and grand-

eurs; and we shall find, if we reflect, that we take the same on with us to life's end. Whether you are three years old, or three-score, nothing is great, for you, that does not impress you greatly, and nothing is small that does.

And herein, if they will read it, is a lesson for those sedate grown people who wonder at and repress the extravagant emotions of children.





v.

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A STARLIGHT RIDE.



THEY woke me out of the sound sleep of a play-wearied boy, a little after the clock in the "long room" had struck ten, one evening, and told me that my grandmother Woodhouse, who had been spending the day with us, and had staid later than usual, was going to take me home with her. She mounted from the horse-block, and they put me up behind her with an abundance of good-byes and cautions. "Take care, and don't fall off, John,—don't get asleep, John." Good advice, but perhaps easier to give than to follow, with the rocking of a drowsy horse to hinder, and only a crupper to hold on by.

We had two long miles to go,—long to me by daylight, longer beneath the stars. I had been over the same road often, but never at such an hour; and it was so grand to be travelling in the night!

Night has as many things to see as the day,

and more for the imagination to be busy with. Night fashions its own world : it has its own creatures, its own colors, shapes and voices, its own grandeurs, its own mysteries. How many things I saw, heard, felt, and fancied, in that ride, which would have been absent in the day-time ! The tops of hills faintly lighted from the sky, their sides mantled with their own deep shadows ; stars riding on their ridges, or going down behind them,—these were of the scenery of the night. How black the shade was, under the trees and rocks ! A grove in a valley looked as if it stood in a pond of ink.

The hour was late, as I have said, when we started ; the lights were out in most of the nearest houses as we passed them, and by the time we reached the little village around the Green, which was about mid-way of our distance, there was not a candle left.

All the houses dark. How still the world was then !—as still, it seemed to me, as the sky above us. It was not a stillness without a sound : it was that deep quiet which renders audible the faintest sounds,—the cricket's chirp, the falling leaf,—and makes loud sounds louder. I could hear the cows by the road-side, chewing their

cuds, with their long breaths between. And how loud the brooks were! We had several of them to cross, two large ones, with wooden bridges, and two or three smaller ones. Each of these had its own proper melodies. Every brook has as many varieties of sound as there are changes in its bed. In one place it murmurs along a stony channel; in another, tumbling over a ledge, it gives you the gushings of the waterfall; in another, winding through a meadow, it seems to be singing itself asleep. The listening ear hears these different voices of the stream separately and distinctly, as it does the several parts of a concert, or a choir, and at the same time is sensible of the combined effects of them all.

I was awake to all sounds. Before a very old house which we passed, were two large pines. The merest zephyr was breathing through them.

"I should think they would cut these trees down," I said.

"Why, child?"

"Because they make such a sighing. I should n't think the folks could sleep."

"Oh, they're used to it, and don't mind it."

From a clump of trees at a distance there came a startling *tu-hoo, tu-hoo!*

“What is it, Grandmother?”

“An owl, my child.”

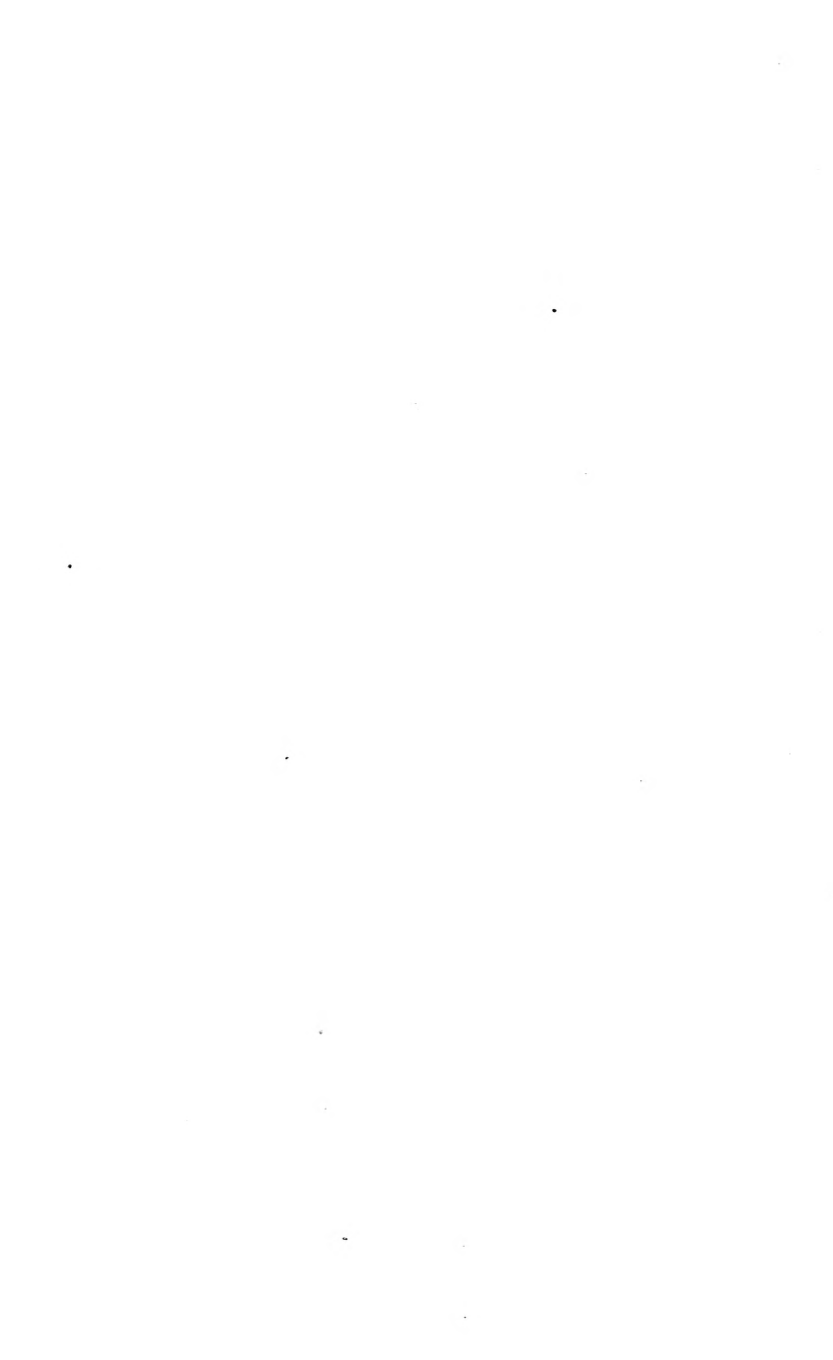
We rode slowly, the horse jogging on in a reverie,—if horses have reveries,—though now and then, his mistress, awaking from her own abstraction, would quicken him with her whip and her chirruping, giving me due notice of the movement, lest I should be unseated. A long ride it had seemed to me, when we stopped at last under the venerable trees that overshadowed my grandparents' home.

Such were the first impressions made on a child's imagination by the scenes of night under the open sky of the country.

VI.

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THE BLINDING WOOD.





FROM the situation of our house, we should have had a fine view in front ; but, unfortunately, right before us, not twenty rods from our door, there was a tall old wood which cut off our prospect on that side entirely. Its owner was that Mr. Crabbe who so grudgingly gave us the brand of fire, on the morning when I made his acquaintance. His beautiful, but negligently-kept farm lay between us and the river. Such a blind before our eyes, depriving us of so noble a prospect, was not agreeable to us ; we could not but wish it were away, or at least, that an opening might be cut through, to give us a glimpse of passing vessels, if no more. But there was no help for it ; the case was not one where that common-law principle, *So use your own as not to injure another's* might be applied ; nor would the old man sell us either the land or the wood itself. Still less would he have been likely to make for

us the opening that we desired, either for love or money ;—certainly not for love. Not that he had not as much love for us as for anybody, but it was contrary to his nature to do a kind act ; he would have slept the worse for it. “ Well,” said my father, after sounding him a little on the subject, “ he has a legal right to have it there, and since he means to do so, we must not allow him the satisfaction of thinking that it frets us.” It did not fret us ; it was a nuisance, but we did not let it disturb our equanimity. You may wish a hill away, that obstructs your vision ; but, knowing that the wish is vain, you do not make yourself unhappy on account of it. Our neighbor’s will was as fixed a thing with us as your hill is with you.

But the old man died, and his farm passed to other hands. We all went to his funeral. It impressed us as a gloomy one. In what state of mind he left the world, I do not know. Nothing was said on that subject by the minister. I heard nothing of it in the few low words of the neighbors who were present. It was to be hoped that his end was better than his life ; but the memory of a man whose reputation while he lived was that of the miser and the churl is not blessed,

however he may have died. His only son and heir was an unthrifty man, coarse like his father, with half a score of boys, the most stalwart and bear-like set of fellows we had ever seen. They would strip in mid-winter on a field of ice, and dive through a hole in it, just for the humor of the thing. The probability now was, that we should have these for neighbors; and that would be more annoying to us than the irksome wood. Indeed, we might come to like that leafy curtain as a kind of screen between us and those roistering, lawless barbarians. But they staid where they had been, and the old house stood vacant.

One day our mother surprised us with the information that our grandfather Chester had bought the Crabbe farm! When news comes with "startling unexpectedness," as this did to us, we want to know particulars; and if it be good news, we wish to be satisfied of the truth of it; and being so assured, we like to dwell on it with our questions and remarks. What our questions to our mother were, on this occasion, may be known from her replies. "Yes, all of it, quite down to the river." "Yes, the house too." "The trees? We shall see. Perhaps they'll cut them down, or some of them; you must ask your

grandfather." And the first time he came to the house, we were around him at once with our petition that he would have a gap cut through the old wood, so that we could see the river. "I shall do more than that, children," he said, "it shall *all* come down, every tree of it."

The Crabbe farm, while its old owner lived, was forbidden ground to us; we hardly dared to cast a glance over its crazy tumble-down fences; but now we ranged and rambled over it at will; we gazed and talked, stood still, ran, clambered, peered into unexplored things and places, and made all manner of discoveries and observations. A look into the stables excited our pity for the cattle that had occupied them; they were floored with cold, hard, shapeless slabs of stone, instead of warm and comfortable planks. We stood on our toes and peeped in at the windows of the silent house, almost superstitiously, half expecting to be startled by the image or the voice of the sour old farmer;—so difficult it is, for imaginative young minds,—and not for young minds only,—to dispeople a dwelling which death has made vacant. There will be, within it and around it, voices, footsteps, *shades*,—phantoms

and echoes of the past,—which you cannot at once and easily displace.

Not many days pass, and men come with axes to cut down the wood. We boys and girls are lookers-on; and a fine sensation it gives us, to see the largest and the tallest of the old trees fall. First, they begin to quiver just a little, at their tops, as if they felt that their time had come; then they lean, crackle, and go down, with their wealth of branches and green leaves, to the ground, crushing smaller trees in their way, maiming their peers, and breaking their own strong limbs. A few only are spared, for their special symmetry, or as shades for cattle in the summer heat.

And now, the view that is opened to us! The beautiful, broad Connecticut, some miles of it, above and below; the boats and vessels on it; the lands between us and the shore; the country on the other side,—these are the larger features of the picture, with innumerable smaller ones to fill and perfect it.



VII.

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CHILDHOOD SANS SOUCI.





IT is the life of the child that we have thus far been considering ; we are getting beyond that now, to the years of youth. Is the youth as happy as the child ? Life may be to him as full of interest, and more so ; but it is the interest of excitement, rather than enjoyment. Youth is restless. It has its ambitious aspirations ; its ardent and fickle hopes ; its vague despondencies ; its suspense between choices and pursuits ; its pinings for the unattainable and the unreal ; its impatience of the slowness of the years that intervene between it and the day of majority, beyond which lies its land of promise. Is this happiness ? It is at least not the bliss of childhood ; which as yet is too joyous to know anything of the tossings of the teens,—those rapids of the river, that are always perilous, and so often wreck an ill-balanced boat.

Still less, if possible, does the child know of

those cares that, like a vapor, overhang the later, busier years of life. Oh! happy childhood! happy in many things,—in the freshness of its perceptions and feelings,—in its innocence, and gayety, and beauty,—in the love of which it is the object,—but most of all in its blissful ignorance of care. If for any one thing more than any other, and every other, we should desire to be children again, it is for this.

Care is the experience of older people. It comes in with responsibilities and years. There is a well-known old hotel near one of our fashionable resorts, thronged and famous once, which calls itself the *Sans Souci*. Abundance of wealthy, gay, nothing-to-do people resorted to it in the days of its glory, chatted in the parlors, lounged and dozed in the shades, listened to music, promenaded, danced, and made an enviable show of that delicious quietude and obliviousness of care to which the house invited them; but who were the real *sans souci* people there? The children only.

What *is* care? Is it thinking of the number of things we have to do, or see to? Is it a weariness of an endless round of duties? It is not that. Those are *cares*; things which are definable, and

may be reasonable, and necessary, and pleasant, even. *Care* has no plural. It is referable to no particular, mentionable cause, or causes. It is a certain vague solicitude, or worry of mind, about one cannot tell what. It is as undefinable as the feeling of loneliness, or superstitious fear in the dark. It remains with us after all our duties are discharged; after our perplexities are relieved, our fears dissipated. The mother is still conscious of it when the last of her domestic items of the day has been attended to, and all her happy household are asleep; more conscious of it then than she was in the active performance of the day's duties. The farmer feels it, though the season is propitious, and his crops are doing well; and feels it still when his barns and granaries are full. The merchant takes it home with him, and to his bed, at night. So does the mechanic. What but this does our Saviour refer to when he says, Take no thought for the morrow? What else does he reprove in Martha, who was careful and troubled about many things? A great variety of epithets expressive of the general sense of its evils have been affixed to it. It is "carping," "corroding," "dull," "cankering" care. Horace calls it envious,—*invida cura*,

—that will not suffer us to sleep, — *dircllit  
sonnos.*

Such is care; and more than all things else, sin excepted, it blights human spirits and mars enjoyment. It makes leaner figures than want, and deeper lines in faces than years and toils. How light-hearted is the child, with his freedom from this incubus! How cheerily the little one bounds into his welcome bed at night! How happy he wakes! And through the long hours of the day what thought takes he what may, or may not be, on the morrow?

Why are we not all, and always, children in this respect? It is because we have not that simple faith in our heavenly Father, which the child has in an earthly one; we do not cast all our care on Him, who careth for us.

VIII.

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OUR FARM.



THE worth of a farm is commonly estimated by its capabilities for tillage. You ask what remunerative crops it will yield. But there is one kind of value which it may have, that is hardly taken into account, except, probably, by the buyer in a depreciative way,—that which may be called its æsthetic value.

There are parts of it, the supposition is, which are not available for husbandry, being too wild and broken either for planting or for grazing; there is no money to be got from them. But they have that kind of worth which pictures have; they are picturesque; they please the eye, improve the taste, and beautify the mind. And this is a higher value than any such as can be expressed by quantities and numbers; it meets a higher human want.

No one can doubt that the Creator has special regard to our susceptibility of impressions from

natural scenery, in the diversities he has given to the earth's surface. He might have made it all even, smooth, and cultivable; but then how monotonous and dull it would have been! Even a world that was all garden, whatever floral beauties it might have, would be a tiresome one. Every lover of the rude and grand in nature feels that He has done better for us than that; and is thankful that it is not in human power to change what he has done. You rejoice to know that the hills are everlasting,—men cannot dig them down. You are glad that there are rocks and precipices which man cannot blast away, nor bury; that there are rough places which he cannot make smooth, and crooked which he cannot make straight; shades that he cannot scatter; cataracts that he cannot still; streams that he cannot dry up; lakes and ponds that he cannot convert into corn-fields and meadows. In fine, you are thankful that the Creator has designed the world for our finer feeling, as well as for our grosser wants, and for grateful contemplation, as well as for the labor of the hands.

Our farm had, for us, much of this poetic interest. It comprised great varieties of surfaces and soils, and parts of it were rude enough to be



romantic: its landscape views, and especially its sunset views, were delightful. It fronted on the river; on the north, the Derwent was its boundary for a short distance, and on the south, the Little Derwent as far as that stream went; for the rest, it had highways and by-ways on all sides of it, dispensing with the surveyor's stakes and stones. A line of four miles would about go around it.

Names are descriptive, as well as historic and directive; and they are as convenient, almost as necessary, for farms as for towns. Every field, brook, or path has its name, as every street and park has, in a city; or as every room has in a house. The following were some of ours: The Side Hill; The Shipley Woods, and Place; The Shady Side; The Run; The Under-Ledge; The Cows' Path; The Sheep's Rock; The Crows' Rest. These were of the western half of the tract. The front portion consisted of smooth and gentle swells, slopes, flats and meadows, with some swamps and marshes.

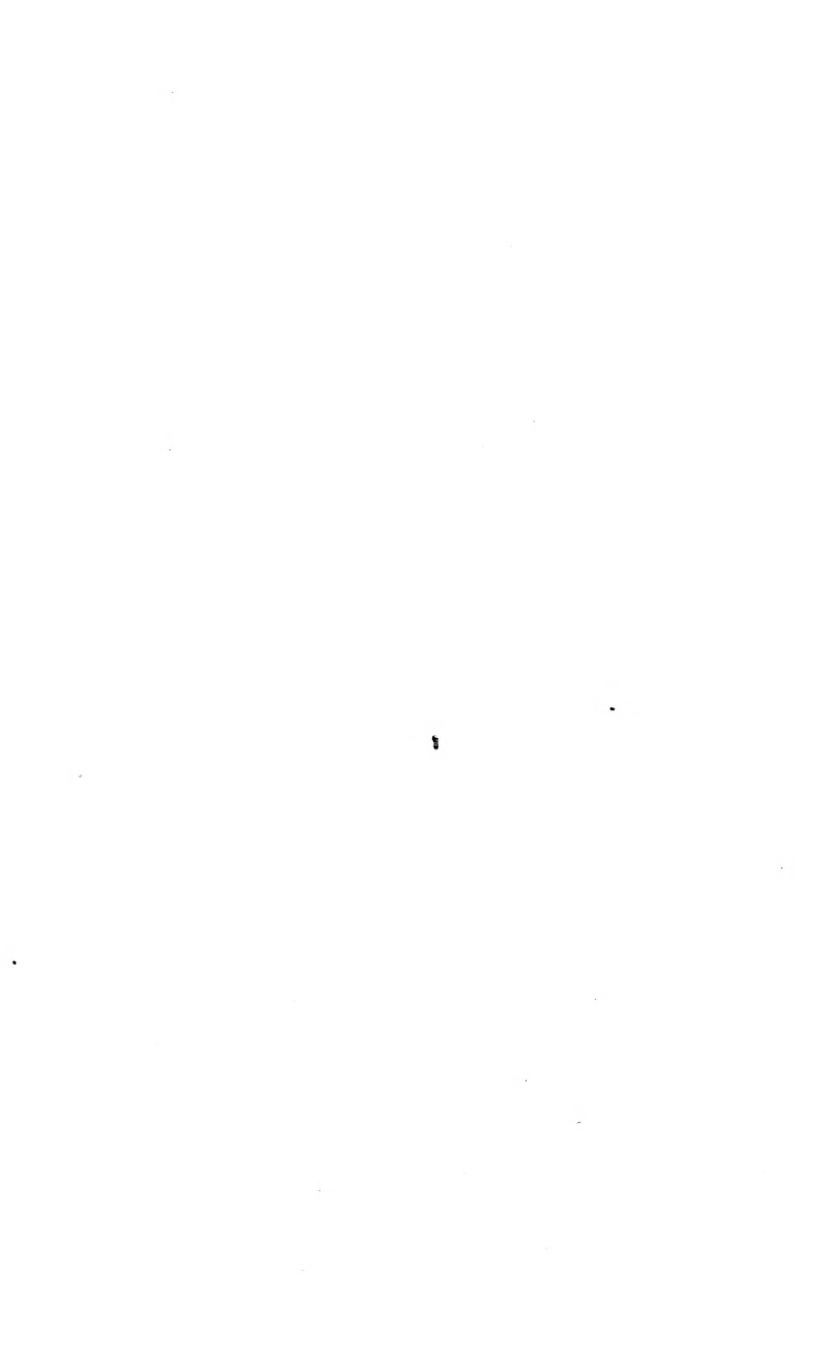
I have seen many finely-diversified and valuable farms, but never one as pleasing to me as was that of ours. The reason will easily be guessed; it is not chiefly because it was such as I have

described it, but because it was *our* farm, and I passed my young life on it. In my belief, there is greater satisfaction in the ownership of a farm than in any other kind of property. For this a number of good reasons might be given: I will mention but one. It is in the *home feeling*, with the liberty you everywhere have upon your lands; for that feeling is wider than the mere roof which shelters you, though not wider than your home domain. If, in your ramblings, you come to a division fence between you and another owner, and get over it, you feel that there you are a foreigner; and if you fill your hands, or pockets, with nuts, or fruit, you are perhaps a guilty trespasser. But on your own side, you are at home, and may range about, and take whatever you find that pleases you. The highways are free to you, but that is a vulgar freedom which you share with others. The freedom of the farm is different. You may there feel—and the view is neither selfish nor extravagant—that everything around you—trees, fruits, rocks, springs, streams, and the very sunbeams, dews, and rain-drops that fall there,—is peculiarly, you may almost say exclusively, your own.

IX.

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FARM WORK.



EACH of the four seasons brings with it its own appropriate work on the farm. If some of it is hard, dusty work, the most of it is easy and pleasant. If much of it must be done in foul weather, the greater part is done in fair. There is an agreeable variety in it; and it is, above all other occupations, healthful and cheerful.

There is much of it that boys can do as well as men. While very young, they can fetch and carry light things, take messages about the farm, watch birds, and be helpful in various other little ways. Growing older, they can drive and fetch cattle, go to mill, help at haying, pick up apples, fodder cattle,—in a word, can do such and so many things that the farm could hardly get on without them. Some of these boy-services shall be noticed as we meet with them in the succession of the seasons.

On our New England farms, most of the

ploughing, the first work of the spring, is done with oxen instead of horses, as it was in ancient times. The first we hear of Elisha the prophet is that Elijah found him ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth. A clumsy plough, or a tough soil, or both, he must have had, to require such a team as that. A man ploughing with a single yoke, and they well broke to the work, can drive for himself; but if there be more than one, he must have a driver; and for that a boy is wanted. This work of driving is easy enough; I cannot say that it is never tedious. It is not active enough for a lad. It is slow walking with slow oxen, over pathless ground, all day long, or till the piece of work in hand is finished. And if your plough-holder happens to be one of the thick-headed sort, or taciturn, with no talk to entertain you, nor an ear to hear you talk, while you stop to allow a breathing-spell for the cattle, so much the more tiresome is the day. I remember sometimes being glad, in such circumstances, of the company of the crows, and their more beautifully black and glossy cousins, the crow blackbirds, and other fowls of the air that lit upon our furrows, looking for the grubs and insects which the plough

might have turned up for them. At that season of the year, too, there will be cold days, and damp, chilly winds, that make the slow pace a shivering one; but the plough must not stop, like the sluggard's, by reason of the cold; and the manly boy schools himself to be indifferent to weather, where duty is concerned. It is a satisfaction to him to see a necessary work go on, and to think of the crop that is going to grow up and flourish, by and by, on the acres they are preparing.

Planting is another work which a boy can do as well, though not as fast, as a man; and a good exercise for his eye it is, to see that he makes the rows straight, parallel, and equi-distant. There is beauty in that, as well as economy of ground. But it takes a farm boy to succeed in it. I have seen a field that an inexperienced man had planted, which looked as if he had followed the tracks of animals that had been driven across it, or as if he had *scaled* clam-shells over the ground, and dropped his seed where they fell. His crop came up so thick in places that it had not room to grow, while in others wide beds of weeds were laughing at the awkwardness that had allowed them so much liberty.

The seasons are so constant and progressive in the occupation they bring, that they leave few idle days for their co-worker, the husbandman. Hoeing follows directly upon planting, and fills up most of the interval between that and haying. A boy can do something with the hoe ; but a man's strength is not too much to use it easily and well. There is an expression of many applications, which has its origin in the corn-fields, — the "Boy's Row." The boy is ambitious to be a man, — to be as strong and efficient as men. Hence, if you set him at hoeing with them, he will do his best to finish a row as soon as they. But he falls behind. They rally him, and he defends himself with the plea that his row is harder than theirs. "Oh yes, Willie, the boy's row is always the hardest."

A scene in haying is pleasing in a picture ; it is not dull in reality. A company of people, with their scythes, rakes, and forks, and teams loading for the barn, in fine weather, do make a cheerful group. It is a boy's work to rake up the scatterings which the fork leaves in putting the hay upon the carts. This "raking after" was a duty to which I was put while quite young ; and there were things about it which I



specially like to remember One was, that it obliged me to mind my work, and be quick and stirring. If I stopped to look or listen, the cart would get ahead of me, and then I must carry my rakings to it. Another thing was the thoroughness and neatness it required. If I left the least lock, or litter of hay behind me, they would send me to fetch it, even to the farthest corner of the lot. Not because of the value of a handful of hay, though that was something, but because it was not tidy farming. A mown meadow should look as clean as a swept carpet. Another pleasant thing to recollect is the kindness shown me by Hiram Heathcote, one of the best of the farm hands, in making my work as easy to me as he could. Some of our men would seem not to care how much they left or dropped for me to look after, when, doing my best, I could just keep along with the cart without such heedlessness on their part; but Hiram would take up the heaps as clean as he could, scattering little; and in case of a wind blowing the hay about, or if from any cause,—a brier in my finger, suppose, or a particle of dust in my eye,—I fell unavoidably behind, he would snatch my rake and bring me up even with my work again. I love to record such

kind acts of that good friend of my boyhood, and I have no small number of them in my memory.

From raking I was in time promoted to loading, which I liked better. It was not unpleasant to be riding and rocking up in the air. It requires some tact to do the work well,—to place the hay all round in a secure and shapely form, taking care of it as fast as a strong man throws it up to you. If that be not done, it may fall off, and though mishaps of this kind ought not to occur, they sometimes do, with ludicrous effect. An old farmer, belonging to the class of universal “uncles,” so called by everybody, bought and hayed some grass in our meadows, and came with his team and man to take it home. They loaded it so oddly that our work-people amused themselves with it. “What ails your load, Uncle John? How it leans! It don’t look the same way that the oxen do. You won’t get half-way home with it.” Uncle John heard these pleasant observations very composedly, and squinting up at his load, he said, “It leans and skews a little to be sure, but it lies *very fa’am*, for all that.” Walter and I, watching for incident and fun, as boys will, followed the ill-balanced pile with our eyes, and before it got out of the mead-

ows, off it went down to the cart-ladders,—much to the surprise of Uncle John, much to the amusement of my brother Walter and myself. It was like Walter to make a humorous application of Uncle John's words. If he saw one maintaining ridiculous confidence in a thing, he would say, "It lies very fa'am."

I was once on a high load which Hiram was driving along a narrow causeway between a ditch and a shallow splash or puddle, which a tide had left there, when suddenly one wheel sunk to the hub, and turned the load topsy-turvy into the water. I had but an instant's time to clamber to the upper edge of the load, and came down on my feet, I hardly know how, on the side of the cart-body. It was a narrow escape from being suffocated under a ton of hay.

Harvesting, too, as well as haying, has its scenes for pictures. A field of grain is a beautiful object at all stages of its growth: it is especially so when it is ripe and ready for the sickle. You admire its evenness, its thick growth, its drooping, richly-burthened heads, and its golden color. Contemplated thus, it is a quiet scene: in the process of harvesting it becomes a lively one, and fitter for the pencil of the artist.

Before the introduction of the labor-saving machines worked by horses, of which we have so great variety in these days, the wheat and rye crops were cut in a primitive, slow, and back-breaking way, with the sickle. To cut them like oats, with the cradle, would shake out and waste the grain too much,—all the better for the birds. If we were to mow them, like grass, the scythe would throw them confusedly into swaths, which would not be convenient for binding. The reaper cuts them by handfuls, and lays them evenly in gavels. These are bound in sheaves with straw taken from the parcel in hand, or else, frugally, with straw of the previous year's growth brought from the barn. The sheaves, as they are bound, are set upright, and the field is studded with them. These are brought together into shocks, each shock containing sixteen sheaves, and in this form the cart takes them. It may seem as if there were no reason for putting just that number in each parcel; but it is convenient enough to do so, and the amount of the crop is told in that way, each shock being estimated to yield a certain amount by measure, on the barn floor. From allusions in the Bible, this way of reckoning by shocks would seem to have been the

ancient one,—in use as far back as the time of Job, at least:—"Like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season." The shock, in those days, may not have consisted of exactly the same number as ours; but it would seem as if it must have been of some definite number, for a hap-hazard parcel would hardly serve for such a simile.

The slow method of the sickle makes many hands necessary, if the field is large. And the weather, too, is a circumstance to be regarded. Improve the sunshine while you have it, and do not lose it for want of men. To-morrow, it may be showery; and grain will not stand wet long, without damage. It is a remarkable instance of the divine goodness, that, every year, and in all lands, the bulk of the cereals is safely housed in barns and granaries under favoring skies,—notwithstanding all fears and prognostications to the contrary. It is very common for farmers to forebode bad weather to ruin their crops, in or before the harvest season. There is neither religion nor reason in this weather-wise grumbling. The rainbow itself should shame it into silence. I remember clouds, mists, showers, and dubious faces at that season, but I cannot recollect any case in which a crop of ours was lost, or mate-

rially damaged, for want of sun enough to harvest it.

As I stood, one day, on a low hill, an eighth of a mile back of a field of rye in which eleven reapers were working abreast, their motions and appearance reminded me of a string of wild geese in the air. I noticed how regularly they all stooped, and clipped, and rose together, and turned half round as they laid their handfuls in the gavels. When they came in at night to enjoy the "flowing bowl" of milk punch to which they were treated, they made a tired but merry company, and not a tipsy one; for my grandfather, their employer, would never hire a drunkard.

The apple-gathering season, when it came, brought us an abundance of occupation. Besides several large orchards, there were single trees scattered everywhere about the lots; so that, in ordinary years, we had eight hundred bushels, or more, of apples, all of which were to be picked up from the ground, or off the trees, one by one. The most of them fell on clean, smooth sward, which made the gathering of them comparatively easy; but, in many cases, they would drop in places not so agreeable; as, for example, a stubble-field, a thicket of briars; or a quagmire.

We usually made three circuits of the orchards in a season. In the first we gathered such of the fruit as was early ripe, or fell prematurely. In the middle of the autumn, we took another turn; the bulk of the apples would then be ripe; the ground would be covered with them, and the air filled with their fragrance. Then, at the final round, a little before the frost came, we shook the trees, and took all the remaining fruit as we went. And by this time it was a satisfaction to us to see each one of them thus bereft of the last shining apple that hung on it, and to say good-by to them for that year,—albeit we had been cheery in the work.

The picking up was for the most part done by Hiram, Walter and myself; though we had a little help sometimes.

And I here must record the fact that not unfrequently my sisters would be out with their baskets,—to their credit and that of our mother who permitted them,—to give their brothers welcome aid, and to enjoy, themselves, a specially happy, wholesome day. I do not doubt that they remember it with pleasure; and, for myself, I can think of them in no circumstances with more complacency than in those apple orchards,

on a fine, fragrant autumn morning, in their sun-bonnets and aprons,—so blithe and active as they were, and so generously helpful at a task which some mothers' daughters might deem too unfeminine for such as they.

The rules which were given us to be observed in our orchard work, would be useful in many other applications: they were, "Pick clean as you go," and "Get them all." It was not well to be running about with your basket under a tree, picking up the thickest, here and there, and have the same ground to go over again; nor to leave an apple ungathered because it had fallen where it was not agreeable to get it, or because it hung inconveniently high, or because it was but one. The apple itself was worth little, but the habits of frugality and thoroughness have a value which we were not allowed to disregard.

The winter was sacred to books and schools. Not much work was expected of the boys; still, there were certain "chores" for them to do, at all times; and when the snow came, with its welcome opportunities for sport, it also gave them more or less wholesome labor in clearing such places as were encumbered by it. Some-



times, that task was not a very light one. Yet the snow was always exhilarating and delightful to us. We were much interested in hearing our grandparents speak of what their parents had witnessed when in their teens,—the Great Snow, as it was called, of 1717. This is what a chronicler who wrote about fifty years ago, says of it:—“On the 17th of February, 1717, the greatest snow fell ever known in this country, attended by a dreadful tempest. This has been related by fathers to sons ever since, and is still referred to as the Great Snow. It covered the doors of houses, so that the inhabitants were obliged to get out at the chamber windows, and buried and destroyed many sheep.” Another account of it says, with a rather singular latitude of figures, “The snow in some places was between six and fourteen feet deep:” which is equivalent to saying that it fell unevenly, in drifts and shallows, as of course it must have done, being accompanied with a “dreadful tempest.” Our impressions of that storm, received in the way I have mentioned, were vivid. We thought it grand: we almost wished we might have another such; provided that the poor sheep should be snugly housed in advance of it. Only to think of putting your sled

out of the chamber window, and sliding down the great drift into the valley below !

Having digressed into this subject of snows, I will mention that there occurred another famous one in the year 1798, which comes, though barely, within my own memory. I can recollect how blank the country looked, with all signs of roads and fences obliterated, trees buried up to their lower branches, and no moving creature visible, except now and then a starved crow flying overhead.

Wood was our only fuel ; and as we burnt it freely in the old-fashioned way, in fire-places, there was much of it to be cut at the door. Such piles as we had in our yard at the coming on of winter, would be a marvel in these days. Walter and I began at cutting, as soon as we could swing a small axe. We called it work, but in effect it was a pastime ; there was so much physical enjoyment in that kind of exercise. I know of none that is better ; and always, to this day, I have worked up my own wood, with axe and beetle and wedges, purely for the healthfulness and pleasure of it. Indeed I have often bought a load more for the sake of cutting it up than because I needed it. The

same was my brother's habit, as long as he lived.

There is no kind of life that brings all the muscles of the body into use and exercise like the farmer's. There are some occupations that keep one always sitting; others constantly require a standing position; some employ the hands only, and others the legs. Many are the instances one meets with, in both sexes, of partial and defective development through partial and defective exercise. But the farm brings the whole of the body into activity, and employs it for a conscious purpose; for an object. There is no gymnasium comparable to it in this respect. We see, in these times, a variety of gymnasia for colleges, for young ladies' seminaries, for remedial institutions: they are all, at best, only tolerable substitutes for something better, where that cannot be had. They may answer for a few athletes, who do not need them, but I deprecate an indiscriminate, compulsory use of them for young human frames, and for invalids.



X.



FETCHING COWS.



DRIVING and fetching the cows was a service to which I was put very early, perhaps at eight years of age. I have no cause to regret the charge; it involved more benefits than hardships. It roused me in good season in the morning, for one thing. Charles Lamb holds it to be a "popular fallacy" that "we should rise with the lark, and lie down with the lamb." He will have a plenty of people to agree with him, sluggish souls, as well as some philosophers and doctors; but for myself I prefer the old adage, and shall never be sorry that I rose, if not with the lark, at least with the cows. The duty was assigned to me alone, my brother being excused from it by general consent; for what reason I cannot say, unless it was because he was by two years my senior, and that the way of the world was, and is, to devolve a variety of minor services and charges upon the younger rather than the elder boy.

I had not far to go, the nearest corner of the pasture, where the cows were let into it, being not more than an eighth of a mile from the house: it was a different affair to find and fetch them home at night; for they had a wide range to roam in. My first trouble in the morning, and also the last at night, was with the bars; they were too heavy and too high for me to let down and put up. I well remember how I lifted, tugged, and staggered under them to get them into their places. My father, observing this, had them replaced with lighter ones. I used to wonder at my grandfather, that, in passing through bars, he would let down two or three of the upper ones, when it was so much easier to climb over them; not appreciating, then the difference which years make in the ways of people.

The tract where the cows were pastured comprised, I think, about two hundred acres. There were a few cross-fences on it, but the bars to these were generally let down, so that the cows had the freedom of the whole,—they and the sheep. The oxen were sometimes turned in there, too, but for these more luxuriant pastures were reserved, because, besides their being re-



garded as of a somewhat dignified order of cattle, they had less time for feeding than the others, in consequence of their labors in the yoke. The young cattle,—weaned calves and yearlings,—were sent away for the summer to some outlying lands, two miles away; and a pleasant season they had of it there, with shades, and brooks, and abundance of sweet feed, and nothing to do but enjoy themselves. Very sleek they looked, and glad to see us, when we paid them a visit, now and then, to carry them salt, and see how they thrived.

The topography of the cows' range would require minute details to do it justice: I will only say, in general, that most of it was elevated and uneven, that parts of it were charmingly rude and wild, and that there were points on it from which you had extensive and pleasing prospects,—which prospects often held me lingering and looking longer than my time conveniently allowed. Some glimpses of its features may be got from the account I am here to give of one of my excursions through the middle of it, looking for the cows.

Entering at the bars, I may go up the face of

the hill which forms the foreground of the tract, and along southward on its ridge,—which lays the river scenery open to me on my left,—or, instead of ascending the hill, I may wind round the northern base of it, rising as I go, till I find myself in a green run behind it. Not seeing the objects of my search there, I pass on through a grand old grove of chestnuts, and come into a small park-like opening of three or four acres, between woods; which we will call the Little Park. Here you will find sassafras; and the sumac, the acid of whose ripe red berries is rather agreeable; and blackberries, in the season of them, in great abundance, variety and excellence; and hazel-nuts—and *night-hawks*,—which will give you little pleasure, unless you hold them in better esteem than I do. They appear to have made this their special haunt and playground. The air will be full of them at night-fall. I dislike their barbarous note, unpleasing enough when heard alone, but a perfect jargon in the air where a good many of them are “scooting” about together. I dislike their ways and manners more. They have a foolish habit of diving straight down, from a great height, almost to the ground, and mounting again, making

a loud, hollow sound with the swiftness of their descent; and sometimes they come swooping down at me in that way, almost touching my hat, and startling me prodigiously for the instant; for the place and the hour are lonely. I might think they meant it for just a frolicsome salutation, a joke and nothing more; but I wish them all dead, or banished.

The truth was, they had no reference to Master John Chester at all, in their divings; they were after flies or bugs; and if they saw one about John's hat, they did not mind stooping for it there. Very likely he himself would have started it up for them.

Pausing here in Little Park, to make up my mind in what direction to continue my search, I decide, suppose, to keep on through the Shipley Woods, so called, before me. They are thick and dark. There is only a foot-path through them, narrow, crooked, overhung with limbs of trees and bushes, and scarcely traceable for the dry leaves that cover it. In these woods I am a long way from any house. It is always a relief to me to get out of them, at night, going either way, but especially going homeward.

Emerging from these dark and tangled acres

into the brighter world on their southwesterly side, a short distance further brings me to the "Shipley Place." Who or what Mr. Shipley was, no one hereabouts, that I have asked, can tell me. He was probably one of the original proprietaries of the town of Derwent; but his race and name are unknown in it now. Here are a few acres of smooth, rich, cultivable soil. There is a domestic ruin on the place;—a cellar, half filled with its own dilapidated wall and with fallen portions of the chimney that rises out of it; a well, bucketless, of course;—the relics of a family; objects such as are always interesting, being memorial and suggestive. There are a number of very old apple-trees; two of which are the largest I ever saw, and great bearers still, and of very fine varieties of fruit. There is an old cherry-tree, too, producing an abundance of English sour reds, and climbable for Walter and me; on which we fill our stomachs and pockets, when the cherries are ripe, we think,—or *almost* ripe, at any rate.

The cows, when found, are glad to see me; for they need the relief of milking. They move as soon as they are spoken to. They know the way. They take the path I came by, and keep

right on, in single file, without going aside or stopping. What a rustling they make,—there are ten of them,—wading in the leaves through the woods! I wish the leaves away; for I like the stillness of woods along with their wildness, that being a part of their poetry; and then I want to be able to hear what may be heard in such a place, and at such an hour;—the fluttering of a wing, the hum of a beetle, the footsteps, perchance, of some dog traversing the woods,—slight sounds that indicate an all-surrounding stillness, and assure me of my safety in it. But nothing can I hear for the leaves under the cattle's feet.

I very often found them nearer home than in this imaginary case which I have described; sometimes they would be at the bars, waiting for me; but this was only when they had calves. Not unfrequently, however, I would have to look far and wide, and long and late, for them,—so that the people at home would wonder what had become of me, and begin to be uneasy. Tired and worried with one of these long searches, one night, I stopped and stood still, in a bushy place, thinking where to look further,—wishing the

whip-poor-wills would be quiet—when I was at once startled and gladdened by the sly voice of Hiram Heathcote,—for he had a way of approaching you stealthily, and surprising you with his sharp, sudden, almost whisper, from a distance. “Can’t find ’em?” “No.” “Where have you looked?” “Everywhere.” “In such a place?” “Yes.” “And in such, and such, and such?” “Yes, in all those places.” “You’ve gone dreaming by ’em, with your eyes shut, somewhere. Come.” And, seizing my hand, he strode on with me, through bush and brake, and up and down, almost swinging me along the ground, till the truant beasts were found. Never did a tired, disheartened boy get so welcome a lift as that.

I do not recollect ever giving over the pursuit and going home without the animals, except in one instance; and then, though it was quite night, my father sent me back to look again. They were in a different pasture, that day, from the one which I have described, and had hid themselves in a most unwonted place. I had to wade through water to get to them.

There is no sunny side in life without a shady

side to match it; nor any shady one without a sunny, if the heart be right. I might make up a chapter of disagreeables on this cow-driving history of mine, as any complainer can on almost any subject or occasion, if he will. To be waked before you have had your sleep out,—to wet your shoes, and drabble your trowsers, in the grass, while the dew is on it,—to be overtaken with solitude and night in lone fields a long way from home,—to have to traverse, after dark, thick woods made more dismal by fire-flies, owls, croaking frogs, and other creatures of the night;—to be looking everywhere for animals that are “nowhere,” like Saul’s lost asses,—to be out unavoidably in drenching rains, or terrific thunderstorms,—these and the like things, of actual occurrence, together with such bugbears as might be conjured up besides, would be material enough for the chapter in question. But the benefits and pleasures of the service were far more than the care and labor. As a part of my early training, physical and mental, it was better to me than so much time at books and schools. Nor could I have well spared it from my recreations. Those cow-fetchings were agreeable excursions, pleasant rambles; and they were the

pleasanter because there was an object, a useful end connected with them; for a walk without an object, like life without an aim, is but tedious. They afforded occasion for solitary gazings and musings; and the solitary musings of a child, or a youth, when the objects of his contemplation are harmless and suggestive, as mine were on the hill-tops, and in the woods and open fields, are no idle waste of time; they contribute to the lasting furniture, the cherished treasures, of the mind. I was in the way, too, in these excursions, of learning divers things which books do not teach us:—the trees of the wood; the wild flowers and shrubs; plants unknown to cultivation, and of what use they are medicinally; lights and shades; shapes and forms; and many things. But I am indebted to the service most of all, perhaps, for the exercise it gave in some important habits, and particularly in those of constancy and perseverance. To drive and fetch the cattle every day, at seasonable hours, reliably, no one bidding or reminding me,—that was the constancy. To look for them till I found them, wherever they might be, or whatever the weather, or the hour,—that was the perseverance. I have mentioned the instance in



which my father sent me back to look again, and to look till they were found. He was right in doing so, though it seemed hard at the time ; for the habit of a life, a strong character or a weak one, success or failure in business, and, indeed, the salvation of the soul itself, probably, has often turned on a single act of persevering or giving up.



XI.

—

OUR DERWENT SCHOOL.



SCHOOLS have a large place in early memories; and I think our primary ones leave more distinct and abiding impressions with us than those we attend in our later youth.

The first seminary at which it was my privilege to be a pupil, was the district school. The school-house, a low, unpainted building, was on a corner of the green, and near the meeting-house. It had an old look, and was, I believe, as old as the parish itself. Time and the weather had made it very gray, and had robbed it of portions of its covering; and no repairs were made on it, because there was talk of building a new one. In its huge fire-place, fires large enough, you might think, to roast an ox, were made. And they did roast the children that were seated nearest them,—to balance which, the remotest ones would be freezing, on a cold day. It was, in fact, a house of three zones, the middle being

the temperate one ; the three comprizing various degrees of heat, warmth, and cold, sufficient to have made it generally comfortable, provided these several temperatures could have been equalized in one.

There was a scene outside, one day, which always comes to me among my reminiscences of that old school-house, and which I shall describe here, not as a school incident, nor for the reader's entertainment, but as characteristic of those times. It is well to know what has been, since the past has lessons for the future. We were arrested in our studies by a drum coming towards us across the Green. We were not aware what it meant, as our raised heads and inquiring looks would have told you : for that was not a training day, nor was the drum beaten in a martial way, musically, but was pounded on by an unpracticed hand, without its usual accompaniment, the fife. The teacher explained to us that a man was going to be whipped at the whipping-post, for something he had done ; he believed it was for stealing ; and said we might go out and see. We all went. The whipping-post was but a few rods off. The officer in charge

of the affair was attended by a number of gentlemen, and a few boys; the gentlemen being present to give moral effect to the castigation, and the boys, of course, from curiosity and excitement. As for us of the school, we stood, a nervous, shrinking group of lookers-on, in the shadow of the house,—for the most of us were very young, as it was the summer term, when few of the older scholars were in attendance. The culprit, who was a stranger in the place, a vagabond apparently, was a strongly built, youngish man, of medium height, with a hard, ugly face, we fancied. A sunny one it hardly could have been, in his circumstances. He was made to strip himself to the waist, and was then tied to the post, and flogged with a common horsewhip. The strokes were not many, but they were well laid on, and forced from him some cries of pain that we heard above the drum. The business being through with, he was let go, the object of a two-fold pity,—for his guilt and for his punishment,—and was not seen again in Derwent. But what a spectacle it was, to turn out a young school to look at!

Every town had its whipping-post, in those days; nor had stocks wholly disappeared. They

were not often used, but they might be, and sometimes were, as we have seen, and they were standing caveats to rogues.

We are sent to school to study what is taught in books; but we do more than that; we study our schoolmates, and are learners of human nature. Children, in their talk and play among themselves, are undisguised. Any school is favorable to this kind of study, but none equally so with the common school; for there is none that brings together so great a diversity of minds and manners, and from so great a diversity of homes;—of these last alone it might suffice to speak, in such a connection, for as the homes are, the children are. This so early and intimate acquaintance with human kind is one of the principal benefits of attendance at these *unselect* seminaries of the districts. The knowledge thus acquired does not, as some may think, cease to be true and reliable as we grow older: it is as lasting as are the identities of the objects of it. Looking back to what people were in their childhood and early youth, you perceive that they are still the same in later life. The man does justice to the boy, and the woman to the girl.



Their maturer education, and the discipline of circumstances, may have modified them more or less, but these have not remodeled them, have not changed, essentially, their mental and moral characteristics. They show the same tempers, dispositions, manners, which you remember of them at school, on the play-grounds, and at their homes.

The studies of the common school, especially the primary ones, are so rudimental and simple, that they are apt to be regarded as the easiest of all book learning; whereas, probably, because the learners are beginners, they are the hardest. It is no small achievement to master the spelling-book alone. But let us see. The first thing is the Alphabet. What is the Alphabet? It is a column or a line of characters, twenty-six in number, duplicated, showing the small with the large; and quadruplicated, if you count in the Italics,—as many, all together, as a flock of wild geese, and flying about as high, in the child's apprehension. One hundred and four, all told, to say nothing of "and-by-itself-and," and the double letters. All these are to be mastered by the merest force of will. They have no meanings to assist the memory, no pleasing colors, no

attractive forms, no helping accompaniments of any kind; they are mere *shapes* to be named and remembered. No two of them are alike, exactly; yet some of them are so perplexingly similar as to have originated that familiar caution, "Mind your *p*'s and *q*'s;" which might as well have been your *b*'s and *d*'s; for these require as sharp an eye as those.

And yet, poor child! the mother wonders that he should be so long in learning his letters. A whole summer at school, or two or more summers, even, and he does not know them yet! And perhaps she chides him, or blames his teacher. Well, I propose that she set herself to learn some other alphabet, say the Ethiopic, or the Arabic, no more strange and barbarous to her than ours is to the child, and see how easily and quickly she will get it. And, to facilitate the learning, I would have her do it in a noisy school-room, at the point of a pen-knife, reading twice, or four times a day, with tiresome, vacant hours between. Such is her little man's task, exactly.

And here let a protest be entered against sending these scholars in the alphabet to school,—if there be any help for it, as in some cases, mostly

Celtic ones, there may not be. How can a mother that loves her child, and can read herself, be willing to subject her little one to so many tedious sittings and dull readings as he must suffer, with his A, B, C, there, when she might make his acquisition of it more a pastime than a task at home?

I have spoken of the barrenness of these alphabetical readings. That is not all the trouble. Like every other study, they require attention and an effort to remember; and the power of fixing the attention, and the retentiveness of the memory, depend on discipline. But, with the learner of the alphabet, this is the first instance of such an exercise in the way of an imposed study. Hence, how easily he is diverted, and how easily he forgets. "Look on, my child, look on the book. Never mind the fly, the wind, the shadow." But how impossible is such abstraction! You might as reasonably, and about as effectually, command away the objects that divert him: begone, wind, shadow, motion.

These remarks are applicable, with diminishing force, to all succeeding studies,—spelling, reading, arithmetic, grammar, and the rest. With diminishing force, not because the studies them-

selves are easier, but because of the student's increasing power, through habit, of abstraction and attention.

Go into the district school, and observe that class at study. The book is the Spelling Book; the lesson a table of words. They are evidently intent on it. The girls bend over it with knit brows, repeating the words mentally, or in low whispers, to themselves, as their moving lips show. The boys manifest a like abstraction, without the moving lips, and in such attitudes as they incline to take: boys being girls in nothing. They are going over the words again and again, and many times; and this they must do, to be perfect in them. It is no short work, or light task, to get a correct and tolerably extensive knowledge of orthography. Words are many, and, in many cases, are capriciously formed, with no analogy, or law, to tell us how they must be spelled, except the bare authority of usage. Those between the covers of the dictionary are many thousands, and those in common, daily use are not few. Evidence of the exactness, the delicacy, the niceness, of orthographic knowledge, as well as the time requisite to the attainment

of it, we have in the fact that so few, comparatively, even of those whom we call well-educated people, are thorough in it. Dr. Noah Webster once remarked to me, that "only editors and printers spell correctly." But editors and printers are not always faultless in this respect. I have just laid down an English book, of recent date and of wide celebrity, in which there are several orthographic errors; and they appear, quite too frequently, in very respectable books and editorials in our own country.

Now I suspect that the district schools make more good spellers than most other seminaries do. I am persuaded that the method they adopt, that of drilling the learners in classes, is the best, and that there is no book so proper for the business as the Spelling-Book. In such an exercise, the ear helps; mistakes made and corrected have an effect like that of discussion and revision, and if "going above" be practiced, emulation stimulates.

Orthography has so much to do with every kind of writing, and every kind of business, and with personal respectability, that it is quite an infelicity to have passed one's school-days without acquiring a thorough and familiar knowl-

edge of it; for this is not often attained afterwards. A man may write a bad hand, as bad as that of a lawyer's brief, and still be a gentleman, or a scholar; but if he misspells, that fact shows him to be a man of defective early education, or else negligent and slovenly in his literary tastes and habits. That letter from your lady friend may be beautifully written, and its sentiments may be fine; but how oddly a particular word in it strikes you! It is so out of shape (for words have shapes), that you do not at once make it out. And you say, what a pity she were not less accomplished in her dancing, in her music, even, so she were more correct in her spelling. It has not seldom happened that an important legal document, a will, for instance, has been made void by the equivocal meaning of a misspelt word. The bad speller not only miswrites his own thought, but may misconceive the meaning of another's writing. An illiterate preacher took for his text, *Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord*; and drew from it the doctrine that there is "a *right* blessedness, and a *wrong* blessedness." Had he been exercised, as he would have been in any district-school, in words of like sound with unlike meanings,—*write*, to use a pen,

*right*, the opposite of wrong; *right*, in distinction from left; *rite*, a ceremony; *wright*, a workman,—he would not have spoiled a solemn text, and made himself ridiculous.

Good or bad habits in the pronunciation, as well as the use of words, are formed much more by home teaching than they can be by that of the school. There are sounds in every language, probably, which children, in their first attempts to talk, find it difficult to articulate. In most cases, they correct the fault early, but not in all cases. I knew a brilliant young man in college, afterwards lieutenant-governor of his State, who substituted L for R, like the Japanese in their attempts to speak English. Through all his schools, in spite of all his teachers of elocution, the defect had cleaved to him. In conversation, in debate, in reading, he would cast out every *r* and thrust an *l* into its place,—apparently without embarrassment, and certainly with the naturalness and force of early habit. He made queer work with words and names. What book are you leading? Am I light, or am I long? Often a stranger introduced by him would be embarrassed or amused by the *alias* that would be given him.

These cases of adult mispronunciation are not attributable to any defects in the vocal organs, but to early training. The family and friends amused themselves with the child's way of speaking, encouraged and kept him in it, themselves pronouncing as he did, perhaps, in their talks with him, till it became so fixed a habit that he could not drop it; for of all learning, the unlearning of our early mispronunciation of words is about the most difficult.

Let me, then, put in a plea here in behalf of infant learners of their mother tongue. They have to get it wholly by the ear. They cannot go to the dictionary to know how a word should be pronounced. They cannot ask us to spell it for them, as we cannot ask an illiterate foreigner to spell a name which he does not give us intelligibly. They must talk as they hear others, or as they are themselves allowed to talk, be it well or ill. If we would secure a correct and graceful use of words in them, such must be our use of words with them. A mother expressed her admiration of the select and refined language of the children of a certain family. "Why should they not use such language? they hear no other," was the reply. They did but what the children of



the rudest family do: they spoke the language of the house.

Whoever recollects his first endeavors with the pen at school, will remember some foolscap pages of very crooked "straight marks." They were supposed to be parallel, as well as straight; but they stood all ways, looking like a field of hop-poles over which a whirlwind had passed. After these, there are essays at curves, or turns, and hair-strokes; which turns resemble broken rims of cart-wheels, and the hair-strokes, sailors' rope-yarns. Out of these unpromising beginnings there comes, slowly, first a legible, then a respectable, and eventually, it may be hoped, a beautiful autography. This last attainment, however, is but rare. The pen is a difficult instrument to manage dextrously—more difficult than any tool of the hand craftsman. In fact, penmanship is a mechanical art; the learner is an apprentice to it; and I am not sure that it does not require a mechanical genius to become an expert in it. The best penman in our Derwent School was the best whittler in it.

The method of teaching was, to make us practise first at a coarse hand; then at one half as large; and, lastly, we might try at a fine hand.

The fine, consequently, was regarded as the test and show of excellence. This consideration, together with the notion that girls must write a smaller hand than boys, that being one of the proprieties of sex, made the girls ambitious to write a very fine one. In this way it was, that my sister Alice formed what I have always called her *mustard-seed* hand. Her letters still come to me in lines so delicate that rows of mustard-seeds dropped on them would hide them;—quite in contrast with the large free hand which many ladies now use. I like to see it, both because it is hers, and because it tells me that her almost eighty years have not dimmed her vision.

It is interesting to note the progress of improvement in small things as well as in great. We ruled our own paper: it did not come to us blue-lined from the manufacturer as it now does. Consequently, a ruler and a plummet were a part of our equipment for school.

Indecorums in the school-room were of course subject to the teacher's notice and correction; but he also had cognizance, to some extent, of the manners of his scholars outside the house; and not only around it, but on their way to and

from it. I have in mind here a civility which all well brought-up children were expected to observe. They were to show respect to elderly people and to strangers, when they met them on the road, the boys by taking off their hats and bowing, and the girls by dropping a courtesy. For an omission of this duty, school-going children were liable to be reported to the master; and sometimes were reported, by some little tell-tale lover of mischief, or some unfledged future moral reformer. "Please, Sir, Charley Cricket didn't make a bow to the man;" or "Fanny Bluebird didn't make a *curchy*."

I suspect that this was an old Teutonic custom,—older than Puritan New England, for you meet with it in parts of Germany, if not everywhere among the German peasantry, not only youths, but adults lifting the hat as they pass you. We might regret its discontinuance with us as a token of respect to seniors and strangers, so amiable in youth; but its observance now would be out of harmony with the spirit of our Young America.

One scarcely knows of a more interesting sight than that of a lovely young school commencing

the duties of the day with appropriate religious exercises. There is a brief reading of scripture by one or more of the older classes, and then, their heads reverently bowed, and the room hush, there is a prayer so simple, appropriate and fervent, that every bosom makes it its own. In that school you may look for order, diligence and improvement, and strong mutual attachments. But religion is a delicate thing in the school-room. The prayer may weary by its length, or chill by its coldness, or shock by its hypocrisy: and they are young and sensitive spirits that are to be affected by it. Instances of such heartless performances, it pains me to remember; and one especially—droning, wordy, long, repetitional, and every day the same. One of the boys declared that a certain expression in it occurred, by actual count of his, thirty-six times,—a statement which was probably not far from the truth. The man made no profession of religion, but prayed by request of the school committee, using a written form.

It is matter of history that the Assembly's Catechism used to be taught or recited, in our public schools. I am glad that it is only history

now, and not a living custom. I say this without the slightest disrespect to the memory of the fathers: few appreciate them more than I do.

The *Shorter* Catechism, it was called. Than what it was shorter, I did not know, not having seen or heard of the Larger; but with what propriety it could be called short, positively, with its one hundred and seven questions to be asked and answered, I could not understand. Saturday was the day for "saying" it; and very tedious was that catechism hour. All the customary lessons of the school were previously gone through with, as on other days. Then, putting books and slates aside, we turned and sat in solemn rows, with folded hands, our faces toward the centre, looking as grave as young faces could, and as—resigned. Sighs from the bosoms of slender forms were audible in the course of this adjustment.

The teacher's way was, to begin at the youngest, and pass from these to the older. I have a perfect recollection of his beginning with me, once. Laying his hand upon my head, every hair of which felt the touch, he said, "John,

*What is the chief end of man?*" Amid profound stillness I gave the answer, "*Man'th chief end ith to glorify God and enjoy him forever.*" How well I understood that, or any "chief end," I cannot say: what I did know was, that the sunbeams on the floor told us that it was noon, and I was a tired and hungry boy. The youngest would soon be at the end of their small stock of answers; the older ones would get on stages farther, like a series of relays; and then after all these, there would be two or three girls,—tall, *lean* girls (no wonder they were lean), who would go on to the very last of the hundred and seven; so that we would not get out till one o'clock, or after;—and that, too, on our only play-afternoon of the week! How we wished those prodigious memories were shorter!

Six long hours in the school-room daily, for five and a half days in the week. So many hours of brain-work there (besides lessons to be learned out of the school), for the older scholars, and so many hours of ennui and yawning for the little ones, and at the end of all this, the Catechism! What ought to be, have been, and are, the consequences? Affections of the nerve and spine, headaches, pallor, lassitude, loss of mental power

through over-work and stimulation, early decay and death. DIED OF BAD AIR, BAD SEATS, AND TOO MANY HOURS IN SCHOOL, would be the proper lettering of many a recent head-stone; and on moss-grown ones, in old cemeteries, you might add, OF SAYING THE SHORTER CATECHISM. We have grown a little more considerate of young flesh and blood, than we were; we have dropped the half day of Saturday, pretty generally, I believe. But we still keep the six hours of the other days. This is too long for the health of young scholars, as overcrowding them with studies, cramming them, is too much for their minds.

I was sent, for a time, when in my teens, to Bacon Academy, then a young and flourishing institution; and there we were required to recite the Catechism with Vincent's "Explications" of it. And that our brains might not suffer for want of work on Sundays, we were expected to get these lessons, with their interminable explications, then, and be ready to recite them the next morning. The principal of the Academy, R——o B——gh, whose memory I respect, required the same thoroughness in these, that he did in Latin, or any other study. But it was up-hill work.

The lessons were so ill-gotten that he declared, in a fit of impatience, that he knew of no stronger evidence of total depravity than the aversion of young people to the Catechism.

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XII.



JACK-O'-LANTERNS.



MY father gave us an account, one morning, of an *ignis fatuus*, otherwise a jack-o'-lantern, which he had seen the evening before. Webster writes the name *jack-with-a-lantern*; but I will give it as I have always heard it spoken. Webster also writes *Will-with-a-wisp*, instead of *Will-o'-the-wisp*; which is another popular *alias* of frisky Jack. My father was coming over the bridge that crosses the Derwent, the "Turnpike Bridge," as it was called. The hour was late, and the night dark. The marshy flats that bordered the stream were broad there, and the crossing, except over the channel, was a long causeway, built high enough to be above the tides. As he came upon the bridge, he noticed a light towards the other end of it, which he supposed to be in the hand of some one coming over from that side. It did not, however, meet him half-way as he expected, but

staid where it was; and, on approaching it, he perceived that it was not on the causeway, but over the marsh, a few yards from it. He sat on his horse and looked at it a long time, and, but for the mire, would have got down and gone to it. It rose out of the mud, a fitful, dancing flame, flaring up and dying away by turns, as a burnt-down candle does in its socket. These were circumstances to be noted,—its fantastic motions and its variableness of volume,—as by means of them we may understand the tricks it practices on beholders.

What are jack-o'lanterns? Ask the chemists; they will tell you. I do not concern myself with them scientifically here, but am only looking at them in the light of the old popular ideas of them. Learned professors did not use to tell us what they were, exactly, only that they were some sort of gas, issuing from low wet grounds, and igniting in contact with the air,—though they were said to be sometimes seen in burying-grounds as well,—which increased their mysteriousness.

The prospect from our home included extensive marshes and wet meadows, and a jack-o'-lantern over them was not a very rare sight to

us; and we were often hearing of them from others who had seen them,—so that we thought we had a considerably familiar acquaintance with them. There was a variety of popular notions in regard to them, some of which were amusing, and some superstitious. Such notions are hardly to be met with now, I think; for science, which dissipates a thousand errors, has scattered these will-of-the-wisp illusions. But, as they have for me, and may have for the reader, the interest of history, I shall specify some of them.

They were thought to have the power of locomotion; moving sometimes slowly and sometimes with astonishing swiftness, and always horizontally, and near the ground. But this apparent change of place was an illusion. For, observing them attentively, you would perceive that the movement would always be directly towards, or directly from you, and never in a line oblique or perpendicular to this. I watched one, which *seemed* to be moving very swiftly, from right to left, and against a strong wind, too, for the night was very stormy; but it soon occurred to me to reflect that, in looking at it, I had not changed the direction of my eye at all, whereas, if the apparent movement had been a

real one, I ought to have turned half-way round. The illusion was aided, doubtless, by the driving wind and sloping rain,—as any fixed object seems to move in a direction opposite to that of a moving one passing by it. A stake standing in a stream will appear to move against the current. The advance and retrocession of the jack-o-lantern are explainable by the increase and diminution of the flame. Growing larger, it will appear to be coming toward you; growing less, it will appear to be going from you; and the rapidity, or slowness, of its movement, to or fro, will depend on the rapidity or slowness of its increase or diminution.

A number of our hired men, sitting out on the ground, talking, one muggy evening, were attracted by a light that could be nothing but a jack-o-lantern. They all sprang up and gave chase to it. It should have been boy-like in me to join them in such an adventure; but I did not care to break my neck, tumbling over walls, stones, and stumps in a wild run in the dark. They came back out of breath, but in gleeful mood, declaring that there was “no overhauling the thing; it went swifter than the wind, and was out of sight in a jiffy.”

It was strange that nobody could ever catch and examine these phantoms. They could have been caught, had people known how, but not with hounds. Our enthusiastic neighbor, "the Major," was quite sure that he had one of them, once. He approached it with the greatest possible care, and clapped his hat over it. "And what was it?" we asked. "It wasn't nothing," he replied. "But what became of it; where did it go to?" "That is more than I know," said the Major. The probability was, that, in treading around in the mud, his foot had closed the orifice from which it issued, else it might have resumed its shining on the removal of the hat.

It was not to be wondered at, considering the mysteriousness and whimsicalness of these singular luminaries of wet grounds and misty nights, and the ignorance even of the savants of their nature and composition, if more people than were willing to confess as much should have felt a little skittish at being alone with one of them.

And you would sometimes hear of ridiculous frights occasioned by them. Two young lovers, returning home from an evening visit, ran bursting into a house, the first they came to, with such precipitancy that they overturned chairs and

tables. "Why, what is the matter; what *has* happened?" asked such of the family as had not gone to bed,—in answer to which they declared that they had met a light borne by no mortal hand, and that it passed directly between them! "Poh! your poker stories." "No, but we positively did." The place where they met the phantom, or it met them (they could not tell which), was where the road crossed a quagmire.

There was a popular notion that a jack-o'-lantern would lead you into swamps and fens; and credulous people really believed there was something in this. And so, indeed, there was. Appearing as these *igncs fatui*, false fires, do, in wet grounds—in marshes, swamps, and fens—if you direct your steps toward them, supposing them to be lights in houses, as easily you may, they will, of course, beguile you into such places.

The old poets have this superstition. Thus Parnell, in his *Fairy Tale*:

"Then Will, who bears the wispy fire,  
To train the swains among the mire"—.

And I think you will find it in Shakespeare—who calls it Jack-of-the-lanthorn, by the way.



A man stopped at our house at late bed-time, one evening, on his way home from a husking. He had enjoyed too well the treat that had been given to the huskers: he was tipsy; and it was doubtful what sort of steerage he would make of it, getting down to his lodgings. The next morning Mr. Prudden, with whom he was living, sent up to us to know if we had seen anything of Mr. Button. They had sat up late for him; but he did not come—had not yet come; and they were concerned about him. My father and others went out to look for him. After a long search, in barns and everywhere, we found him lying by a fence, a few steps from a bog-meadow at the foot of Mr. Prudden's home-lot. He stared at us as we came around him, and inclined to be silent to our inquiries. His look was bewildered, his clothes were torn and very muddy, one shoe was missing, and altogether he made a very woe-begone figure. He was quite spent, and needed help to rise. The only account he would give of himself, or could give, probably, was, that he had been led into a swamp by a jack-o'-lantern. A short story, and, without doubt, a true one. He saw a light which he thought was in Mr. Prudden's house, and made

for it, persistently, and very stupidly ; for he had to leave the road for it, and make his way through or over fences ; which would have told a sober man better. So he got swamped and lost.\*

\* If some reader should happen to remember an article on Ignis Fatuus which appeared many years ago in "Silliman's Journal of Science," and some incidents mentioned in it, it might be necessary to say that it was contributed by the writer of this.

XIII.



THE RIVER.



“**A**N ingenious Spaniard says, that ‘rivers and the inhabitants of the watery element were made for wise men to contemplate, and fools to pass by without consideration.’ And though I will not rank myself in the number of the first, yet give me leave to free myself from the last, by offering to you a short contemplation, first of rivers, and then of fish; concerning which I doubt not but to give you many observations that will appear very considerable; I am sure they have appeared so to me, and made many an hour pass away more pleasantly, as I have sat quietly on a flowery bank by a calm river, and contemplated what I shall now relate to you.”

I quote this passage of our quaint old friend, honest Isaak's, because it suits my subject, and perhaps because it pleases me; though I cannot so confidently promise to append to it “many

observations that will appear very considerable."

The Connecticut, the largest of the New-England rivers, and one of the most beautiful in the world, was a great thing with me in my boyhood. Many of my hours of pastime were spent on it and at its side, and many of my working hours, too, along and near its bank.

I loved to listen to its voices,—the fretting of its tides, coming in with breezes from the south; the murmurs of its waves; the dash of oars, when the air was still; the sailor's, or the boatman's song, on a moon-lit evening: the "Heave-o-heave" of sailors at the windlass, and the click of its dropping pall as they were getting up their anchors; the flapping of sails when a change of tack was made.

Every one knows what a conductor of sound is water. The river was said to be a mile wide there. It looked as wide as that; it might be less; but at any rate it was so wide that no one would think of making his voice heard across it, shouting. And yet in certain states of the atmosphere, as we stood at the water's edge on our side, the most ordinary sounds would come over to us with perfect distinctness, from the

other. We often listened to the splash of cattle's feet wading along the opposite shore. There was a solitary hut near the water on that side, tenanted by a poor family. I was startled, one day, by the sharp cry of a child belonging to it. The mother ran out, chiding it as if for a fault. Every syllable was audible. She caught up the little fellow in her arms, uttered an "Oh! dear" of pity, took him into the house, reappeared in an instant, and ran up the river-side a long way, till she came to a road that turned inland, and disappeared. Something had befallen, evidently, and she was running for help. I learned, afterwards, that her little boy had climbed a tree that overhung a rock, and had fallen and broken his arm. How much have the distinctive dresses of boys and girls,—of the sexes,—to do with their distinctive habits!—though nature, which cannot be *reformed* away, undoubtedly does more. A girl's dress is not convenient for climbing; hence girls do not climb, and fall from trees, and break their limbs, as boys so often do, and sometimes their necks.

I was never tired of looking at the river itself, as an object of beauty. But the great charm was the vessels. Almost always there would be some of

these in sight, under sail, or at anchor ; often there would be a whole fleet of them coming into view together, from some reach above or below, where they had all been wind-bound, for hours, or days, it might have been,—on board of which it was but truth to fancy a great deal of gladness, now, if not of gratitude, for the change of wind that had given them release. These would be pleasing objects in any eye ; in mine they were fascinating, because of my strong penchant for the sea.

No life appeared to me so bold, adventurous, and hardy, and at the same time so jovial, as the sailor's. This impression I got from the river, very naturally ; where I saw only the fresh-water end of the business. The crews of vessels just in from sea were always merry,—though they were less so, going out, I noticed ; and then they saw so much of the world, I fancied, and brought home such luscious fruits and sweetmeats. Thus the river was like to make a sailor of me ; but Providence and my friends were against it ; and so was my own maturer thought. My desire for a life on the ocean did not much outlast my early boyhood.

This captivating feature of the river, the vessels, has in a great degree disappeared from it



now. The last time I was there, instead of the many sails that used to so enliven and adorn it, I saw only a dirty-looking schooner, or a rusty sloop, passing up or down, at long intervals, to carry stone, or coal, or such other articles as steamboats and freight-cars do not care to take. A very solitary look my once delightful old Connecticut had to me. It is the steamboats and cars that have made the change. And what have they given us, instead,—these great things of progress? of which I do not lightly speak. More speed for goods in a hurry, and for people; but at the cost of how much of the agreeable and pleasing of the old routes and modes of travel! What neat and home-like resting-places were those quiet inns we used to stop at, along the green old roads!

Dean Swift, I think it was,—some humorist,—defined angling to be “a stick and a string, with a worm at one end and a fool at the other.” The author of that witticism would himself have been what he describes, with a fish-pole in his hand; for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. But I could not have allowed it to be applicable to boys, in my young days; nor do I now, looking back to that time. There is more sense and bet-

ter taste in Izack Walton's opinion. "I shall tell you," he says, "what some have observed, and I have found it to be a real truth, that the very sitting by the river's side is not only the quietest and fittest place for contemplation, but will invite the angler to it." Angling, sitting still on a river's bank, or a pond's, may have an idle look with it; and it may be idleness in fact, as the habit of some minds is; but it may be well for educators of the young to consider whether, in all cases, hours that are spent in apparent listlessness and vacancy are wasted hours. The richest intellectual stores of the finest minds have been the acquisition, often, of such hours. Rambles in the valley, or by the river, or by the sea-shore, and the society of woods, and shades, and brooks, and feathered and four-footed things, have done for them what seminaries and teachers could not do.

My brother and I passed many a pleasant hour together, with our hooks and lines. Fish were abundant in our waters, and of various kinds, so that we seldom failed to take as many as we wished. We made some observations on their natures and habits. Aside from their respective qualities for the table, which might be the only

ones that an epicure would think of, the scaly people have social instincts, are sportive, curious, shy in some cases, bold in others, and, in different degrees, beautiful, graceful, agile, or strong. It would be tedious to give instances; but why should they come and go in shoals and companies, if they had no social affinities; and why does the sturgeon, for example, leap out of water, unless it be in play? I believe that fishes need repose and sleep, as creatures of the land do, and that, perhaps, they love light and sunshine for this. I saw, one day, a fine large pickerel lying perfectly still, and evidently napping, in a shallow sun-lit water, under the bank of the Derwent. Approaching it carefully, I struck a smart blow with my fish-pole directly over it. Instantly it darted out of sight, and the next instant returned with a force that threw it high and dry ashore; and I picked it up. To be awakened so suddenly and violently appeared to have crazed it,—the pickerel being a remarkably shy fish.

A variety of benefits substantial and lasting, as well as pastimes, my brother and I derived from the river. And if these were got in the way of amusement, the value of them was none the less

for that. One of the benefits was our familiarity with boats. We learned to manage them with confidence, in the roughest weather, with oars, or with sails. And I can truly say that this acquirement has been of much use to me. Often it has enabled me to be my own ferryman when I could not have found another. Many a time it has saved me from uneasiness and fear on the water, and has been the means of quieting the apprehensions of others. More than once it has availed me in circumstances of considerable peril. More than once, too, in my boyhood, it led me into peril. I remember venturing out with two other lads, in a small boat, in such circumstances that spectators from the shore regarded us as little better than lost; and indeed we did but narrowly escape. I think we may have owed, in some degree, the cheerfulness and vigor of our boyhood to our boating; for I know of no better gymnastic exercise than a pull at the oar, and there is no better air, off the hills, than one breathes on the water.

I have no idea how, or when, we might have acquired this tact and confidence as boatmen, if we had not done so when we were young, and in the way of pastime. There are many useful

things which boys learn, being boys, which they would never learn, being men.

There was always beauty, and sometimes grandeur, in the river fogs. One needed an elevated position, such as we had at our old home, for observing them. Often they occurred in the evening; and then they only hid and mystified everything. But oftener they would appear early in the morning, when the previous day had been hot, and the night cool. First you would see a soft, white line, rising from the river, of the same width with it, resting on, and hiding it, and winding with it; the tributary creeks, on both sides, also assuming the same appearance.

The fleecy vapors, slowly rising, almost sleeping, when the air was breathless, would spread themselves over the adjacent meadows and low grounds, and then floating upward and outward, would fill all the lower valleys, and then the higher ones, till only the tops of hills would be visible, showing like islets on a feathery ocean.

The most of these would be on the further side of the river, the country on that side abounding with hills. Some of them would have houses on them, others groves.

Fog is a fantastic, shifting thing, curious to

contemplate, but not easy to describe; nor do I suppose that any two people would, in a given case, see and describe it alike. And in any large and varied scene, there are small phenomena that hardly can be given descriptively; they want the eye. In the progress of these vaporous formations, here spoken of, every moment changed the aspect of the landscape, and, in effect, the face of nature. First, as I have said, you had the river and creeks of mist; then the green meadows turned into a misty lake; and finally, if the mass happened to rise and rest just high enough, and evenly enough,—no matter if it were a little billowy,—and you looked over it, you had the feathery sea. The illusion of an ocean, or shoreless water, with a polynesia in it, as we sometimes saw it, was perfect. This effect was best beneath a bright full moon.

The river in its vernal flood, or freshet, was an object of interest, as all rivers are at such a time. There would be thousands of eyes looking at it, all along, from its source to its mouth, many of them anxiously, because of the damage it might do. Instead of our usually placid, quiet river, ebbing and flowing with the tides, and content within its banks, it became a swollen, turbid stream,

bearing on its bosom many evidences of the mischief it was doing above us. It overflowed and did away its tributaries; drowned the meadows; spread a wide lake beneath us; and cast its drift-trash all round upon the temporary shores it made at the bottoms of our front lands.

One would hardly believe what a bar to social intercourse a river is, between people living on the opposite sides of it. "Mountains interposed make enemies of nations, which had else, like kindred drops, been mingled into one." A mile's width of water makes strangers of families which had else been near and pleasant neighbors. As we looked across to Hadington, it seemed to us a *terra incognita*. We knew some names of people on that side, and whose were some of the houses that we saw; we were acquainted with their venerable and genial old minister,—the "Patriarch," we called him,—and were often made glad by seeing him in our pulpit and at our house; but in most social respects, and generally, the two sides were as two hemispheres. Their gossip and small news, their parties, courtships, weddings, seldom crossed the intervening water. It would be an idle speculation, but hardly an unnatural one, in such circumstances, just to im-

agine how different many things might have been, but for such a barrier; as, for example, what different conjugal and family connections might have been formed, and how much happier, or less happy, the parties to them might have been.

I am lingering too long, I fear, at the river, but I must say something of its old crossings, the ferries; which had somewhat of the romantic about them. "A boat, a boat! Unto the ferry."

They were located at the narrowest places of the river, and were from two to four miles apart. They were established by colonial authority, and, of course, were legally protected from opposition lines, and regulated as to fares. "This court"—so runs the grant of one of them,—to wit, the general court, May 10th, 1694,—“grants liberty to Robert Wakefield to set up a ferry over the Great River in Hexam for the future;” and it has been called Wakefield’s Ferry from that day to this.

It was at this ferry that we oftenest had occasion to cross, and the account of it to be here given may answer, in most respects, for all of them. The road that led down to it from the main highway was houseless and shady, and



there was neither house nor wharf at either of its landings. Arriving at it on our side, if the ferryman was on the other, and out of sight, as he generally would be, his home being there, you had to blow the horn for him, or rather the great conch-shell, which he kept ready for the purpose. You would find this lying conspicuously on the head of a post. If you had come on a horse, or in a carriage, you must have it where he could see it, and near the water; else, seeing only a pedestrian, he would come over for you in a skiff, or, if he was in doubt about this, as he might be, seeing a horse, yours or somebody's, a little in the background, you would be asked by him, through a speaking-trumpet, "Have you got a horse?" If you had, you would say so by bringing the animal forward; and in that case he would come in a large boat, with a hand to help. The boat was of the scow fashion, though not as large as the ordinary scow; the bottom as flat as a floor, the sides upright, the ends square. The mast was stepped in one of the sides, to be out of the way of carriages. The sail was a shoulder-of-mutton, boomless, but sometimes having a short gaff. A rude-looking craft was the old ferry scow.

She was not as regular and punctual in her trips, or transits, as is the modern steam ferry-boat. She knew nothing of time-tables, and not much of time itself. Often some accident, or circumstance such as a strong current, a broken oar, or an intractable horse, would retard her, and tax your patience in waiting. But there is seldom an inconvenience, or a loss, without some compensatory thing attending it; while you are waiting thus, there will be others arriving and waiting with you; conversation will ensue, and an opportunity be afforded you for studying characters and manners; or, you may sit down by yourself and be occupied with listening and looking,—as one may, in such a place, rivers being “made for wise men to contemplate.” “It is very tiresome, this waiting for the boat,” says an impatient man to an acquaintance, a lady who is sitting tranquilly on her horse near the shore. “Yes, if one is in haste, it is,” she replied. “I am not pressed for time, this morning; and I am never tired of looking at the river.”

The old ferry man, grown grave and weather-beaten with long service, was a character in his way, and might be worthy of our notice; but I

shall leave the river and the reader here, if the reader please, with these good people that are waiting for the boat.



XIV.



ANNALS OF THE MEADOW.



THE MEADOW, as we called it, by way of eminence, but sometimes the River Meadow, was an important feature of the farm. It is the margin of meadows that makes the valley of the Connecticut so rich and beautiful. Ours was a fine, luxuriant tract. With the river in front, it had the Derwent and the Little Derwent for its limits north and south. Originally it was a wet and almost impenetrable swamp, a thicket of alders, briers, creeping vines, and a variety of nameless and noxious growths. At the time of my earliest recollection of it, about sixty acres had been reclaimed, but behind these there were many acres still in their wild state.

This swamp was the home and the hatching-place of various birds, particularly blackbirds. Vast numbers of these made it their retreat and lodging; and a secure one it was, for you could not see them, nor get at them there with a gun.

But every winter saw the domain of the bush and the bird contracting, and that of the scythe enlarging; the winter, with its frosts and leisure, being the time for bush-cutting. The swamp is gone now, and gone are the blackbirds,—as are the Indians with the forest. One sees a few of them flying about, but not those immense flocks that once darkened the air like clouds, and blackened the tops of trees wherever they lit, and crazed people with their music, if music it was, when the humor took them, some hundreds of them together, to scream and chatter in concert. This they sometimes did, on a bright day, with their crops full of stolen corn, no doubt; but of these performances they were rather chary; for they were not, naturally, great singers, nor had they good consciences, it may be believed, being thieves and in bad repute.

The meadow presented a variety of scenes and aspects, successively, in the course of the four seasons, which might be called its Annals.

Nothing could be more chill and dreary, in a child's eye—in any eye—than that meadow looked in winter,—cold, lone, and silent. And the frozen river without a vessel or a boat, between which and the meadow there seemed a sym-  
pa-



thy and fellowship in lonesomeness, was an extension of the scene. The snows that fell on either did not drift and twirl themselves into fantastic shapes and heaps, as they do, so playfully, on uneven ground, but lay in flat, dull, monotony, like a vast sheet spread out to bleach. Nor were the rigors of the picture softened by the cold, bleak hills of Hadington for a background.

Spring comes, and with it comes the freshet, submerging the meadow for a time, but enriching it with the alluvium it has brought down from many hill-sides and mountains in the north. It is the freshets that have made these bottoms; for many a century they have been about it. Each age works,—the Creator working in and with its natural forces,—for the benefit of the ages that come after it; as each generation does for its successors. These bottom-lands, in their rude state, are instances of nature's working; these charming meadows are instances of man's.

After the freshet came the fishing season. And then the river's bank and the river were alive with men of the boat and seine, and with people coming from back towns to buy shad. Our fishermen, Derwenters generally, were men of good common education, and good morals. The most

of them had other callings of their own, but they liked to quit them, for the time, for the sake of change. Often there were wits and humorists among them, and generally they were a merry company. Fishing, in all its kinds, is naturally exciting for the adventure of it, and its luck; and in those days, when the river was so much more full of fish than now, and great hauls were so common, the shad-catching was by no means of the dullest sort. Of course the river-side was an attractive place to boys; and still more so were the creek-sides, that of the Derwent particularly, if they had their fish-hooks with them.

This scene passes, and we have, next, the meadow in its summer aspects. You go down into it about the end of June, suppose. The fishermen are gone; their boats are hauled ashore and sheltered, or turned bottom-up; the reels are naked, and the capstans idle. The place is lonesome. How rank and rapidly the grass has grown! You stand and contemplate the broad, green expanse before you,—broad in fact, but seemingly broader than it is, because it is so flat and even, and so destitute of visible bounds and objects to aid the eye in estimating it. We judge of distances, heights, magnitudes, as every pic-

ture-seer knows, by comparing them with objects that we are familiar with; for example, of the height of a tower by that of a man we see at its base; of the extent of a prospect by the size of animals, or other familiar things in the background. In this meadow over which you are looking, there is not a tree, nor a shrub, nor a swell, nor a bush. The line of bush, still unreclaimed, that skirts it on the rear, looks lower than it is, because of the grass which partially conceals it, and, looking lower, seems further off. The grass, peculiar, as it would almost appear, to those river meadows,—I have never seen it elsewhere,—is exceedingly exuberant, owing to the fertilizing deposits of the vernal floods. Almost even with your eye, it presents a peculiarly soft and feathery surface. It is flecked with its own gay lily, the meadow-lily, and other meadow-loving flowers; and is vocal with its own bird, the meadow-lark.

If anything had been wanting to enhance the lonesomeness you naturally felt in such a place, this bird would have supplied it. It had a holiday look, for its plumage was gay; but its spirit was restless, and its music peculiar and melancholy. It would rise, fluttering, a few yards

straight up in the air, warbling as it rose, and then, dropping itself upon a lily-head, or any stem that would bear it, would sit a moment and be up again. Its notes were exceedingly rapid, and as liquid as the sounds of water dropping into a silver basin. I never could account for the effect this bird had on me, invariably, whenever I heard it,—and I oftenest met with it in lonely fields of tall grass, particularly the meadows. Nor was I aware that others were similarly impressed by it. Was it owing to some idiosyncrasy in me? Turning now to my dictionary, I find this description of it given by Webster: “A well-known, beautiful bird, often seen in open fields in the United States. Its note is clear, but melancholy.” So others, as well as I, have perceived this quality of its music: the idiosyncrasy was the bird’s, not mine. I can hardly forbear to mention that, at the moment I am writing this, the note of one of them, still “clear, but melancholy,” as in the former time, reaches me from a meadow not far off.

Go down into the meadow in the afternoon of a bright day in haying-time; or look down on it from a neighboring eminence. Rakes and forks, flashing in the sun, are streaking the ground

with long windrows, and rolling these into great brown heaps. Large patches more are striped with swaths, lying as the scythe has laid them. Great loads are piling on the carts and moving off for the barns.

“And what of all this?” some one will say, perhaps. “What do you invite our attention to here but one of the very ordinary affairs of farm-life, the business of making hay?”

It may be that I am too fond of reviving old familiar scenes: it is true that this is but a common one, and any account of it may have but an ordinary interest with ordinary people. The interest of any scene, however, as an object of the senses, depends on the eye of the beholder; since all beauty, all ugliness, is in the mind. In the view of your dry utilitarian, your mere matter-of-fact man, that “mown grass” is so much *fodder*,—nothing more,—so much wealth to its owner; for the which the said owner is to be congratulated, or envied. But, in the musing boy’s eye, all those streaks, and belts, and heaps, and loading wains, are a grand and vivid picture, full of life and poetry. And the picture is the more charming because it is a changing one. Each row and pile has its shady side, and the

shadows stretch and spread themselves every moment, as the sun declines, till all the ground is mantled with them, and dusk and night close over the scene. Search in the child's mind for that picture after threescore years and ten have passed, and you will find it.

Cattle feeding on the meadow, in autumn, finish its history for the year.

XV.

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CATTLE.





A MONG the gifts to man at his creation were the domestic animals. They were given him for meat and for service. But it is not to be supposed that they were merely for these uses; there were other and finer ends concerned in the gift. They have a social and a moral value. They are a trust committed to our care; and are for the exercise of our benevolent and kindly feelings. They have their poetic aspects. The country would want one of its essential charms without them; country homes, and farms, would be comparatively dull; green meadows would be wastes, and pastures unprofitable wilds.

Dr. Johnson quotes a passage from Ecclesiasticus, "His talk is of cattle," with a contemptuous application of it to the friend he was visiting, because he entertained him with his farming affairs, rather than with literary subjects: it might

have been well for Dr. Johnson's rough nature if he had himself been more conversant with cattle than he was.

My talk is of cattle. I have a few things to say here, of their habits, tempers, and behavior.

They are very susceptible to kind treatment, and equally so to the opposite: which is evidence of the intention of their Creator that kindness should be our law in dealing with them. They recognize the kind owner as a friend, and are glad to see him anywhere. They have a mute, grateful look for him, raising their heads, as he crosses the fields where they are grazing. The call "Co', Co', (*Come, come,*)" would bring ours from the remotest corners of the pasture,—perhaps from a thicket, or a wood, or from behind a knoll, often on the run, and lowing, expecting to be treated with salt, or some other good thing.

So susceptible to gentleness, and the contrary, are the animals, that you may infer from their behavior the tempers of their owners. The oxen of the kind owner will not refuse the yoke, nor be impatient under it; it is otherwise with those of the unkind one. Our neighbor, Mr. Nettler, for instance, was a fractious, fretful man, and the behavior of his beasts was answerable to this.

The gentlest and best-broken horse in the world was sure to be spoiled in his hands. So were oxen. He came one day to the foot of a hill with a load of wood. The oxen were doing well enough, but, as they began to ascend, he must needs begin to whip and bawl to keep them agoing. This disheartened and confused them. They stopped and settled back. And now, smarting under the lash, and whisking their tails, they would give, first one and then another, a jerk, no two of them drawing together. "What does ail the cattle?" said Mr. Nettler, and began to whip and bawl again with vigor. The effect of this was to make the forward yoke swing round on the off side against the hind ones. Being met there with the butt of the whip on their noses, they went round the other way. Meeting with like treatment there, they swung back again. And for the benefit of all abusers of oxen in the yoke, I should like to see a good engraving of the scene which they and their owner now presented. They were all in confusion and "heads and points." One poor beast would lift his nose as high as he could, to avoid the thwacks that menaced it, while another would drop his between his feet, and another would whisk his

tail and make a deprecating moan. "I never did see cattle act so," said Mr. Nettler, and kept saying so, when, in fact, he had seen his own, these and others of his, act just so a hundred times.

At this juncture my grandfather happened to come along. "What is the matter, Mr. Nettler; can't they draw it up?"

"Can't? They *won't*, and wouldn't if you threw off half of it. I never did see creeturs act as they do."

"Suppose you let me try 'em," said my grandfather. "I think they'll take it up easily enough."

Getting down from his horse, he passed round the team, patted each ox, spoke to them in kind and cheery tones, and by a little pushing at their hips,—for they were standing all ways,—got them straight and right for a united pull. "Not yet," he said to their fretful and fretted owner. "Not yet; there is too much white in their eyes for a good start yet." And then, waiting till they had become quite calm and reassured, he took the whip from Mr. Nettler's hand, to prevent his using it, not to use it himself, and in a tone of gentle, but decided authority said, "Come, now, come—all together—go along." And they went, steadily and bravely, quite up the steep, their

volunteer driver keeping along with them, and their owner following.

Arriving at the top, "Ho," said my grandfather. "Let them stand and breathe a little, now; they have done their duty very well;" and handing the whip to their owner, he passed round and patted them again. "How strangely they behave!" said Mr. Nettler. "Did anybody ever see such cattle?"

The fondness of all creatures for their young is interesting; that of the neats is not the least so. The cow manifests the greatest satisfaction in suckling her calf. Though her teats may be sore, or her bag caked, she does not mind the sharp teeth or the butting of the young thing. Keeping the calves at home, you will see the mother at the bars of the pasture waiting to be let out at night.

When a cow calves in the field, she hides her treasure; and that so securely, in some bush, or dell, that it is difficult to find it. She is careful not to aid you in the search. She lies down, or feeds, at a distance from the spot; and though she may keep an eye on you if you get pretty near to it, she does it with an air of unconcern. She is relying on the calf to give the alarm, if

necessary ; for the calf is in the secret with her. The reliance is not a mistaken one. If you come upon the innocent suddenly, he starts up and bellows with all his might ; and then comes the cow, in great excitement, running and bellowing in response. I remember instances in which the search had to be given up : there was a calf somewhere, but who could tell where ? In such cases the cow must be driven home and kept awhile, and then be taken back, and watched from a distance.

Both quadrupeds and fowls are often laughably at odds with the instincts of the changeling young of different species. A hen will hatch ducks, or goslings, and will care for them as she would for chickens ; but she is greatly embarrassed by their behavior. They will not understand her cluck ; nor take what she scratches up for them from the ground ; nor learn that most important lesson of henhood, the duty of scratching for themselves ; they refuse to roost with her on a tree or on a pole, when they are big enough to do so, and she thinks it not safe for them to sleep on the ground ; and, worst of all, at sight of water, they will run straight into it, at the imminent risk of being drowned. All these odd

ways of theirs are unaccountable and distressing to her.

A lamb had lost its mother. We put it to a new milch cow. She disliked the fosterling at first, but soon became as fond of it as she was of her calf, licking the two alternately. When the calf was taken from her to be weaned, she made no complaint; but when the lamb, which had thriven wonderfully, was taken away, some time after, she had evidently lost her pet. Though she had always been a very quiet and orderly creature, she would now low all day in the pastures for the lamb, and break through strong fences to get to it.

There are various instincts and ways which one notices with interest in all the domestic animals of the farm; some of which are common to the different kinds, and some peculiar to individuals, and to species.

They are gregarious; and this is another way of saying they are sociably disposed among themselves. They like to feed and rest together. If you find one of the herd, or of the flock, in the fields, you may expect to find the others not far off. This was often a relief to me in looking for the cows. Searching everywhere in the wide

pasture, I would come at length upon one of them, and would say to myself, cheerily, There! there's one of you, and the rest are somewhere near.

They are susceptible of strong *individual* attachments, in certain circumstances. Two horses, or two oxen, that have worked together, are unwilling to be separated. Virgil gives us an instance of this, in the passage in which he represents an ox as mourning the loss of his mate, which has dropped and died in the furrow.

They are all sportive while they are young, and will be more or less so when older, if they are well fed and cared for. You see bullocks locking horns in play, and sleek cows go frisking homewards at night. Even a large fat ox of my grandfather's, capering about the lot with his mate on a frosty Autumn morning, fell and was so much injured that it was necessary to kill him.

They have their peculiar instinctive fears. The horned cattle—I cannot say as to other kinds—do not like to be in the woods in a high wind. I remember a number of them running wildly out of a grove of tall old chestnuts into the open ground, and there stopping, with their heads up, looking. A black squall behind them accounted



for their behavior; they heard it coming, and might be apprehensive, with good reason, that it would bring down trees, or limbs, about their ears; or they wanted, at any rate, to be out in the open world where they could look and see. A different kind of danger might have sent them into the wood, as a hiding-place.

Their tempers and resentments, in individual cases, are remarkable. I was in the habit of throwing potatoes, one at a time, to a pet cow. She was extremely fond of them. I threw her a cold boiled one; she ran to it eagerly, took it in her mouth, dropped it, turned short round and kicked at it; and cast an angry look at me. We had an animal which we called the Black Cow. She was indeed the blackest, as well as the finest-haired and sleekest creature that could easily have been found; and gave the richest milk. She might have been exhibited with confidence at a national cattle-show. She was perfectly gentle and well-behaved, except when she had a calf; then she was one of the Furies. It was dangerous for any one to go near her, except a man to whom she was used, armed with a stout stick. It was not our way, however, to beat her, in her moods, high-strung as she was; that would only

have made her worse. It happened one evening that there was no man at home. One of the maids said she would undertake to milk her, if I would stand by her. I, a half-grown boy, accepted the service; and providing myself with a cudgel, posted myself a yard or two before her. She shook her horns at me, now and then, and made other hostile demonstrations, particularly a low angry bellowing or moaning, which was characteristic of her, but held in tolerably well, for her, till the girl had finished the milking and left the yard. Then, as I turned to leave, she drove at me from behind, knocked me down, and stood over me, bellowing, with her nose close to me, fiercely trying to catch me on her horns. I got half up repeatedly, and was knocked down again, but at length succeeded in springing to my feet, my cudgel in my hands. Then she turned and pitched herself right through the strong close siding of the cow-house, an open wing of the barn, as a cornered cat goes through a pane of glass; and ran madly down the road.

There was an old Scotch Highlander in the place, who was always boasting of his bravery in the old French War; he had been where the "blue bullets were flying, and the Yankees ran

away." He scouted the idea of being afraid of a cow,—that "rid coo," as he called the one we had to deal with on a certain occasion,—or of using any particular precautions against her; and, putting his bravery in practice, he started for the barn-yard where the creature was, with only a piece of a broomstick in his hand. "Stop, Donald," said my grandfather, calling after him; "stop, I tell you, or you'll have her horns in you." "Hoot! mon; afraid of a coo!" he answered, over his shoulder, and kept on into the yard. The cow at once assumed a manner toward him more formidable than French bullets. He thought it prudent to retreat; but before he could get to and over the bars, she had him between her horns,—*seated* between them,—and pitched him quite over into the street,—much to the amusement of my grandfather, who saw he was not hurt.

The Black Cow would resent an affront sometimes when there was no calf in the case. She was licking some salt upon the edge of a bank which was faced with a steep rock some two yards or more high; when one of the old wheel-oxen, Duke by name, as white as she was black, and of twice or thrice her weight, came and

drove her away from it, and went to licking it himself. She retired to a higher part of the bank, and stood looking down at him, shaking her horns as her way was, and was evidently getting worked up into a towering passion ; till, by and bye, she turned and plunged squarely down upon him, and with her sharp horns against his ribs, pushed Duke sideways off the steep. It was a wonder, heavy as he was, that it did not kill or lame him ; but he got up and walked slowly away, while the cow finished the salt in peace. There are *characters* among animals as there are among men ; that black cow was a character.

There are animals which, if they were human, you would say were humorists, rogues, wags. Young bulls often are instances of this. You are starting off the cows in the morning for the pasture. Mr. Bull resolves that they shall not budge a step without his permission ; and, in pure mischief, taking possession of the road in advance of them, he drives them back in your face, persistently. Of course, the question of authority is raised between you and him ;—*quo warranto*. As “neither words nor tufts of grass will do,” with the young sauce-box, “you try what virtue there is in stones.”

I have never seen a steeple-chase, but I was once engaged in what might have passed for one. I was mounted on a smart young horse, and a frolicsome, young bull was my competitor. Rough fields were galloped over; braker and tangled vines were ridden through; a stone fence was leaped; a steep hill-side swiftly descended, a hidden "pent-road" threaded; and a mill-pond swam,—that is, the bull swam and re-swam it, myself crossing and re-crossing on the dam, at some risk of being swept off by the water that was pouring over it. And here the bovine party gave up. Cooled by his bath, and his breath spent, he was willing, now, to return on a slow walk to our starting-place—a pair of bars through which he had waggishly refused to pass, or let his fellow-cattle pass, from that pasture to another. The race was an exciting one to all concerned. The horse enjoyed his part in it. No necks were broken, nor eyes scratched out, but I would not care to repeat the performance.

Neats, like sheep, goats, deer, and some other grazing animals, crop the grass and swallow it with little or no chewing. In this way they fill themselves, and then, as every one knows, they stop and ruminate, gulping up the contents of

their stomachs by mouthfuls, chewing it thoroughly, and swallowing it again. Standing or lying in the shade, their eyes half-shut and sleepy, they are a picture of contentment and repose. And this chewing of the cud is to them, without doubt, a prolonged gratification. What are they thinking off? Nothing? That is more than he that says so knows. We say they are ruminating. Applying that word to human kind, we mean by it, musing, meditating. Do cattle muse and meditate?

XVI.

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S H E E P





I WOULD not choose to miss the ovine people from my farm-life reminiscences, as I would not the bovine, or the equine. "As timid as a sheep," "As gentle as a lamb:"—these are proverbial expressions, and they both convey descriptive truth. No creature is more timorous than the sheep is naturally, and none is more confiding, where confidence is safe. Within and around the barn-yard they will eat at the same rack, or pile of hay, with the ox, or the horse, without fear of horns or heels. A mess of oats in a corn-basket was set down in the back yard for old Dick, the pet family horse; two or three saucy sheep immediately thrust their heads into it, and Dick was likely to be robbed of his dinner. It was of no use to nip their woolly necks; so, taking the basket in his teeth, he trotted off with it and set it on a pile of cord-wood above their reach. In the pastures they will come

crowding around you, if they know you, treading on your toes, bleating in your face, and asking for the salt you may have been thoughtful enough, they hope, to have in your bag, or basket, for them.

They have a mortal fear of dogs. At sight of one their instinct is to flee; but if they have young lambs with them, they will stand and face him, and stamp at him with their feet,—a show of bravery which amuses children more than it scares the dog. They are, however, not at all afraid of their own farm-dog. Nor are they much afraid of their near canine neighbors which they often see, and know to be well-disposed. And how confidently they go afield with the shepherd's dog, where such are used. Between him and them there is a perfect understanding. He knows the allowed limits of their range; and if they go beyond them, he brings them in again. He does this in the gentlest manner, and they easily submit to it. Very admirable is his vigilance and fidelity. And, in my belief, it is for this service that this species and others susceptible of similar training, were specially intended by the Creator. In wide, unfenced districts, such as the grazing countries of the East were

anciently, and are now, and such as there are in many parts of Europe, it would be difficult to manage sheep in large numbers without the dog. And, besides the assistance he renders, he is company for the shepherd, who must be often solitary in the fields. Job employed them in this way; and had more respect for them, he said, than he had for some of human kind,—“whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.”

Sheep are noticeable as curious path-makers. Moving in single file, and keeping to the same track when once adopted, they tread, with their small, sharp hoofs, a hard, well-defined path, of a few inches' width, and very crooked,—winding through bushes, around stones, hillocks and quagmires, along the valley, up the hill-side, through the wood,—showing more regard to lines of beauty than to economy of distance. I was fond of threading these devious “sheep-paths.”

The ram leads the flock; where he goes, they follow. I remember a ludicrous instance of this. An old man, drowsy from drink, lay down under the wall by the road-side and fell asleep. Behind the wall was a field of grain; some sheep

got into it; the owner of the field came and drove them out; and the ram, happening to leap the wall just where the sleeper lay, came down right upon him. He started up in a maze, and tried to get upon his feet, but, plump, plump, plump, they all came, knocking him over as fast as he attempted to do so. A mashed hat, torn clothes, and some spots of black-and-blue on his skin, were the consequences. The old man's comment on his adventure was, "*Sheep are an innocent lookin' critter, but they have a good deal of divil in 'em, after all.*"

"As crooked as a ram's horn" is a form of comparison much in use; and it is the best that could be hit upon; for of all things ram's horns are the crookedest. No two pairs of them are of a common fashion, nor is it often that the two on the same head are alike and well-mated. The horns of other animals have some form and grace to them, and are ornamental; those of rams—which are rudely ringed and rough, as well as crooked,—would be deformities were it not that we regard them as natural, and proper to such heads. Things of nature's own forming, though they may be unshapely, odd, queer, can hardly strike us as disagreeable. And, indeed, how ridiculous

would a ram look with other than such horns as rams naturally have. But they sometimes assume a twist that is uncomfortable to the wearer. I noticed, one day, in the pasture, that a ram's face was bleeding. I caught him without difficulty,—for he seemed to hope I might relieve him,—and found that one of his horns was growing into his cheek, causing him a slow torture. He held still while I cut off as much of it as was necessary. It was a tedious job, for my knife was small and dull; but the remembrance of it has been a lasting satisfaction to me. It should be a part of every one's wisdom to know that the pleasure resulting from an act of kindness, is a lasting pleasure; and that equally enduring is the pain consequent on its omission.

“Wool-gathering” is another expression often met with. It has a figurative significance in common use; the literal is this: sheep, in their ramblings about the fields, will often leave a little of their wool hanging upon briars and bushes. You can go and glean it, if you will, but it will not pay you for your time.

The black sheep is made the representative of an ill-behaved person: “He is a black sheep;” that is, a disturber of his family, or neighbor-

hood, or in some way an exceptional, and exceptional, character. The literal black sheep, thus libellously made the symbol of bad qualities, is peculiar only in its color; there is hardly one in a hundred. The brown sheep is still more uncommon.

To an ordinary observer sheep may appear to be so much alike as not to be distinguishable one from another. This is not the fact; they are individually knowable by their faces, forms, fleeces, and by other marks. This accords with our Saviour's reference to them in the tenth chapter of John.

Sheep-washings and shearings are good enough subjects for the poet and the painter, but an account of them such as I, who am no artist, might write, would hardly interest the reader. I will, however, give the outlines of one of them, and leave it for him to fill them up and color them, pictorially, for himself. Imagine, then, a rude pen extemporized at the edge of a pleasing water; a flowing brook, suppose, or a pond. Into this enclosure the sheep are huddled. The men who are to do the washing appear in costumes suited to the occasion, that is to say, in the shabbiest of scarecrow clothes.

These take their stand, waist-deep, in the water, while one on shore passes the sheep in to them, one by one, as they are wanted. Boys incline to have a hand in this; they like a touse with the creatures, and particularly with the ram; and perhaps they enjoy a little their groundless apprehensions. There is no fun in it for the sheep. They have no aquatic inclinations,—are not fond of swimming, as the boys are; and the chill of it!—a whole fleece full, gallons, of water, which not many days since was ice. The barnyard, where they have passed the winter, has soiled them, but, at the end of this ablution, they return to their pastures looking as white and clean as linen from the laundry, or, as we say, as white as wool.

The shearing, which is done a few days later, is a relief to them if the weather be hot; but if there comes a cold storm soon after it, such a change from their thick winter clothing to almost none at all is too much for their comfort and for their health, and they must be housed.

Lambs are interesting for their innocence and playfulness. Washed with the summer showers and dews, they are beautifully white and clean—emblems of purity. They delight to play in

troops. You will sometimes see scores of them, if so many can be mustered from the flock, scampering away together, like the hurry-skurry at an English fair. I remember counting sixty of them in such a troop, and observing their gambols. Now they are running with their might across a level ground; directly they are lost sight of in a hollow; in a minute or two more they are on the crest of a small stony knoll, standing thick and close, and making an admirable show of heads. Their high physical enjoyment is obvious; how much the pleasure of the frolic is enhanced by the excitement of an emotional and social nature in them,—by mutual participation and companionship,—by emulation, perhaps,—our love for the animal creation may suggest, though our philosophy cannot tell us.

These, in their play, are witnesses for the benevolence of the Creator.



XVII.

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DOGS.



THERE are people who do not like dogs. They have various reasons for their aversion to them:—"Dogs are untidy creatures,"—"It costs too much to feed them,"—"They run mad, sometimes." There are differences in dogs, as well as in human kind, and there are some of the one, as also of the other, whose company is not desirable. But where the antipathy is to all dogs, indiscriminately, I am apt to suspect that the subject of it has not been fortunate in his, or her, canine acquaintance.

A lady who had had a vague dislike of them from her childhood up, was surprised, one day, to find herself the owner of two, by gift from different donors. What could she do with them? It would not be delicate to refuse acceptance of them. They were young, and of no vulgar breeds; and were, she confessed, pretty creatures,—for dogs. Her children were pleased

with them; and, at any rate, they were on her hands for the present, and must be fed. She must let them stay till she could give them to friends who would be glad of them, and use them well. A few days pass, and she begins to think that she will keep one of them, and dispose of the other. But now comes the question which? They were so intelligent, so foud, so amusing in their play, so attached to her and the family, so unlike, and yet with such a balance of qualities between them, that, really, she said, it was hard to say which she preferred. She proposed to her husband that he should decide the matter; he declined to do so, with a smile. He had never sympathized with her in her repugnance to dogs, and was amused with her perplexity. In fine, it took her a whole year—this lady who could never hear of having a dog—to make up her mind which of her two pets she would part with.

Were I to write a disquisition on dogs, I would meet objections to them thus: A good dog pays his way, and more too, whether the trouble or the cost he makes you be regarded. You give him bones and refuse bits, such as a beggar at

your door would not accept, and for these see how he compensates you with love and service. He heightens the pleasantness of your rambles with his company: you sleep the sounder for his vigils. He carries parcels for your children going on errands, greatly to their aid and his delight. If you are a farmer, he saves you steps when laggard or wayward cattle are to be driven. If the hogs are in mischief, you have only to point with your finger and say *St!* and your clover is quickly cleared of the grunting poachers. And what a promoter he is of good feeling in the house! You see that group of mirth-loving children; they are happy, as they are; but let Banco come in among them, with his laughing eyes and wagging tail, and they are the happier for his company. Or are they out of humor, peevish, suffering ennui, call Banco in, and their tone will be changed. It is hardly in human nature, adult or juvenile, but especially in young natures, to continue long in ill-humor in the presence of a fond and noble dog. And then, his singular attachment to you. Human love excepted, there is no love so strong, constant, and unselfish as his. Who has not heard of most touching instances of the mourn-

ing of dogs for their masters or other human friends?

And on the other hand, what fondness we conceive for them! "I never desire to own another dog, because I would not feel again so badly for the loss of one," has been said a thousand times. "The misery of keeping a dog is his dying so soon," said Sir Walter Scott. I called, not long since, at a friend's house; the ladies received me in their accustomed polite and welcoming way, but with a quiet sorrowfulness in their manner which was not usual with them. Their eyes, evidently, had been wet with tears, and, indeed, the air of the house seemed almost funereal. Being seated in the parlor, and the customary commonplaces being through with, one of the young ladies said to me, "We are feeling sad to-day; our poor Ponto was run over and killed at the depot this morning, and we have been having him brought home and buried."

Slabs of marble, or other memorial monuments, are often placed at the graves of dogs. I know a gentleman, a man of genius and a scholar, who carved a statue of his *Sappho* to preserve her memory.

As to our dogs, there have been more remarkable ones; yet they had their particular characteristics, and being ours, and mixing themselves as they do, more or less, with these home recollections, they claim some mention here.

The earliest on my list was a large one, TROOPER by name, belonging to my grandfather. He would come every day to see us, and, walking in with the freedom of a friend, would look around for the young folks of the house, from whom he was sure of a cheery welcome. Carpets were fewer in those days than they are in these, and sanding floors, particularly kitchen floors, was a common thing. The sand was sprinkled on wet, and then drawn with a broom into wavy lines, or chequer-work, or whatever figures the maid's or the housewife's fancy choose to give it. It looked quite well so long as it stayed as the broom left it. But whenever Trooper sat down on it, with the merry group about him, he would sweep a clear half circle with his tail; and it was like children, in the humor of teasing Betty, to make him sit in as many places as they could. "Here, Trooper, sit here, and here, and here." And so the nice sand car-

pet would soon be full of bared semicircles and prints of the dog's and children's feet.

Trooper lived to be old, and my recollections of him are consequently distinct. His color was a rich dark brown, except on the breast, where it was mixed, or gray. I think he was a genuine specimen of that famous old breed, the mastiff, now rarely seen. He was remarkable for his fidelity as a watch-dog.

SACHEM, a young dog, showed symptoms of madness. They tied him up in an out-building to see how his malady would turn. I looked in upon him at a window. At sight of me he drew in his breath, nervously, and made me shudder, by what was between a sigh and a growl. He had to be killed. He affected me with a fear from which I could not get free in years,—the fear of mad dogs. When I was alone in solitary places, or was sent on errands in the dark, this apprehension of meeting a running rabid dog was the one nervous feeling which it took all my manliness to overcome;—so vivid and enduring are strong impressions, and especially those of pain and dread, on young minds.



SPLASH was a water-dog, sleek, handsome, and good-tempered, but of no manner of service about the house or farm. Send him after a floating thing in the water, and he would delight to fetch it to you; set him on hogs in mischief, and he would run among them and lick each one in the face. None of the animals, not even the sheep, had the least respect for him as a police-dog. His great amusement was to swim across, and re-swim, the river; which he would do several times a day when work was going on in the meadows,—for he liked observers. He would aim to land at a particular point, a rock, on the other shore, that his eye fixed on; in order to do which he must take into account the drift, or leeway, to which he would be subject from the current. A man would throw in a chip, or some light thing, to test it. As Splash could not do that, his way was to plunge in, no matter where, and swim off a little, and then return and run up or down the shore, as he had found the stream to require, to a point sufficiently high, or low, to justify his setting off. Sometimes, finding the force of the current greater than he had thought, as he would when there was a freshet, he would return ashore a second time, run up farther still,

and set off again. On the other side his way was the same, except that there he had no need to try which way the tide was running, having learned this already.

Splash had no bad ways; and, though he had no admirers, except perhaps for his beauty, nor enthusiastic friends, he had no enemies. He was a great listener to talk, and, you might think, an intelligent one; for if the talk turned on him, with a laugh, he would leave the company.

GYP had more of the cur in his look and character than any dog we owned;—short-legged, long-bodied, dingy-haired, with a plodding gait. I never looked at him without wondering how we came to have such a dog. But he was by no means deficient in brains. He was my father's special favorite; and he repaid his good-will with an almost exclusive attachment to him, and by charging himself with the care of everything that belonged to him. If he left his chair a few minutes, of an evening, Gyp would take possession of it, till he came to resume it. He was mysteriously missing for several days, coming home once or twice in the time, and asking for food, and then immediately disappearing again.

Being followed, he was found in a distant field keeping guard over a coat which his master had left there.

He was singular in his resentments. My brother and I went out to Lakeside in a sleigh; he went with us, self-invited. In getting past a snow-drift, the sleigh tipped and hit him. It did not hurt him much, but it so displeased him that he turned short round and went home. On our return, we found him moody and reserved. The collision was purely an accident, or if not, the fault was more his than ours; but he chose to think it intentional on our part, and laying it up against us, with a persistency not usual with his kind, would never go anywhere with us afterward.

LOUP was fond of "baying the moon," as Brutus calls it,—of baying the echoes, more probably, which is Peter Pindar's idea:—

"Like some lone puppy, yelping all night long,  
That tires the very echoes with his tongue."

Barking in the night is not a commendable habit in dogs; it disturbs wakeful children and nervous people, pleases nobody, and is, in fine, a

senseless practice. But I was obliged to Loup for it once.

I was out on the river in a skiff, as it happened, at midnight. A thick fog had come on, not only enveloping all things in darkness deeper than night, but creating a thousand illusions and bewilderingments such as neither day nor night naturally knows. There was no moon, nor stars, in the sky; no lights from windows; no shore to the river, no east, west, north, or south,—no any way, nor anything, but fog and water. Whereabouts I was, or which way I might be rowing, or drifting, was past conjecture.

But now, away in the distance—hark! It is Loup at one of his midnight serenades. I know his voice, and it guides me to the shore as a fog-bell guides a vessel feeling her way into port.

FLIT, a hunting dog, of one of the hound varieties, was a slender, graceful creature, buff and cream-colored, with small, flapping, velvet ears. She had been trained by one of the Heathcote family, a cousin of Hiram. The Heathcotes were of the Nimrod order, mighty hunters, and had been so from the first settlement of the parish. One of them said to me that he knew of no

music like the music of the hounds after a fox. Their barns were curiosities for the skins that were stretched on them to dry, or stuffed and hung about their windows,—of fox, raccoon, squirrel, muskrat, and woodchuck, and other kinds. Flit had the spirit of the family. Nothing pleased her like the sight of a fowling-piece, and no place delighted her like the wild woods. She would readily go with any one, even a stranger, so equipped, and for such a destination. In the woods you would get glimpses of her, coursing everywhere, and hear her light steps among the leaves, till by and bye a single slight bark would announce to you that she had treed a squirrel. Going to her, you find her sitting under a tall tree, looking up. You see the squirrel on one of the topmost boughs, half hidden by the foliage, looking down at you quite composedly ; for he is sure he is too high for you. It is a gray squirrel, of course ; for Flit pays no attention to chipmunks and other trash. You raise your gun and bring it down ; Flit leaps and catches it before it reaches the ground, passes it to you, and is off at once for another.

The woods, the dog, the game, the boy !—these make a picture of young life in the country,

which for romance, healthfulness, and pleasure, the city cannot match.

JERRY and FRANCO, being contemporaries and playmates, must be named together, though Jerry was the elder by two years or more.

Jerry was a black-and-tan terrier; and the reader must permit me to say he was the finest specimen of his kind that I have ever seen. We had him of a dog-fancier, who, in training him, had done justice to his merits. Franco was reported to us as a cross of the Newfoundland with the Spaniel; and from his looks and instincts I should think the account correct,—allowing a predominance of the spaniel.

Jerry was the handsomer dog of the two; was more spirited and graceful in his movements,—was more brilliant every way, and more attractive to strangers. But Franco had qualities, of a different kind, to match these.

Jerry had an exuberance of life in him. In his ordinary trots his feet hardly touched the ground; but to see him in one of his frolicsome runs round and round a field, you would fancy that he was some light thing carried by the wind. He would gambol in the same wild way

in the parlor, when allowed to do so; and he was allowed it often. Franco appeared to be equally full of enjoyment in his own quiet way.

Franco was remarkable for his simplicity and honesty. Though Jerry, always full of fun and mischief, was often playing tricks upon him, there was no end to his confiding good-nature. Jerry would pick up a stick, or an old shoe, and challenge him to get it away, if he could; and they would have a long pull at it, Franco dragging Jerry by his superior weight, with a great deal of affected growling and showing of the whites of the eyes, on Jerry's part.

That was play, and was so understood by both. But Jerry would find an old bleached bone, or a horn, and pretend to gnaw on it, as if it were something good,—too good to be shared with Franco,—though they always took their meals together very amicably and sociably—and if Franco presumed to go near him to see what it was that he was so very choice of, he would fly at him with a snarl. All make-believe, of course; but Franco, like some people, did not understand jokes, or, if he did, did not resent them.

Jerry had the peculiar instinct of his breed in the highest degree. No rat was safe on our

premises for an hour. He would dig at a rat-hole with the greatest enthusiasm. Franco, looking on, would wonder what he was about; he evidently thought the fellow must be out of his senses. Instincts do not understand each other. Sometimes Franco would put in with his paws, to help, though awkwardly, with no idea what so much furious digging meant; which only bothered Jerry. Franco had his hunting instinct, too; but for another kind of game, the muskrat.

Under chastisement, Jerry would crouch very low, and look up with a meek and penitent air; but the next minute he would be off frisking and frolicking. He was too full of life to be unhappy long. Reprove Franco for a misdemeanor, and he would be cast down about it all day; he could not be happy till with a cheery word you forgave him. Then he would be beside himself with joy.

Jerry was not quarrelsome; he lived on good terms with his canine neighbors generally; nor did he ever fight with dogs of his own size. But if a big dog put on airs towards him, he was for a fight at once; and it would go hard but the big dog would come out of the fray worsted. Jerry's way was to get under the belly of his adversary, and bite him in the fore legs,—keeping



under him by his superior agility. In one instance only, while we had him, the large dog, a very savage one, such as wagon-driving peddlers often have with them, got him in his teeth; and he gave him such a shaking that he was laid up by it for days,—yelping if you touched any part of him. But this did not subdue his spirit; that was indomitable.

We had not expected to keep both the dogs. One or the other of them must be disposed of. The question *how* was easily settled, negatively; we would not sell them. The question *which* was often discussed without any decision being reached by the general mind of the family, or by any one of us. But at length it occurred to us that a lady, a friend of ours in Massachusetts, would like just such a dog as Jerry. The result was, that after some correspondence, Jerry, with his collar and chain, was put in charge of the mail-coach driver to be passed on, by a series of stages, to the place of his destination; and the poor dog left us with a look that said, “For what, and whither, are they sending me into exile?” A few days after we received a note which ended as follows:

“Jerry arrived safely. He looked weary and anxious, but our manner soon reassured him. ‘Are you hungry, Jerry?’ Helen asked him; and he answered, with his musical voice, in a single bark, ‘Yes.’ He is quite at home with us already, and we are delighted with him.

“Affectionately, your cousin,

“ELIZABETH CHAPMAN.”

Franco missed his fond and sportive playmate, —wondered what had become of him,—looked wistfully around for him,—woke up at every mention of his name. He would make a lookout-station of the wood-pile in our yard, and sat, watching and listening, on the highest part of it.

Franco had a fixed dislike of boys. It was hard for a boy to attract him in any way; but to girls he gave his confidence freely. I suppose that the reason of this was, that boys had thrown stones at him, mischievously, just to scare him; or had been otherwise uncivil to him. Girls did not do so. He showed this partiality for them everywhere, to strangers as well as to those of his acquaintance, provided they were not untidily dressed. We were riding some miles out of town one day; on a door-stone sat a neatly-dress-

ed little miss intently reading. She raised her eyes to us as we passed, and let them fall again on her book. Franco stole up to her and just lapped her cheek. I should have been sorry for his rudeness, if I had not seen that she was not displeased by it at all, but only smiled after the offender as he trotted away from her; which gave me a good impression of the child.

He would be civil to any one, however appalled; but a person genteelly dressed, especially a lady, would receive a rather over-demonstrative welcome from him. I do not, however, speak of this as a thing peculiar to Franco; I think it belongs to all dogs that make any pretensions to respectability. I have a missionary friend in Siam, who tells me that dogs there give the missionaries much annoyance on account of their dress; which, being European, and not the native, is in the dogs' view barbarous.

Franco disliked the katydids. I heard him muttering and growling about the house in a singular low way, one bright evening, and went out to see what the matter was. He was peering and gazing up among the trees and vines, sometimes barking a little, *sotto voce*, as well as growling, and seemed curious to discover what the

jargon was, and whence it proceeded ; for there was nothing to be seen. He turned to me to know. They are katydids, Franco,—nothing but katydids ;—noisy things, but they'll do no harm." They had just come for the season in unusual force, and this was the first of his acquaintance with them. He got used to them, but never liked them, evidently regarding them as a set of crazy, cracked-voiced disturbers of night and moonshine.

He could never be content to go to bed without a *bon soir* to every member of the family. He would come in early in the evening, pass around among us, lap each one with his tongue on the hand, or in the face if he could steal such a liberty, and immediately retire to his lodgings in the wood-house, to which he had access through a swing door.

He was extremely fond of the water. He would plunge in with a whine of gladness,—sometimes from a considerable height, as from a bridge or wharf, which dogs will seldom do,—and would swim about barking with delight, and scouring the surface for floating things to fetch ashore. If you lost a hat, or an oar, overboard from a boat, he would recover it for you ; and I

have no doubt he would have saved a drowning child, or that he might have been easily trained to acts of that kind.

Sundays,—no other days,—he invariably spent away from home. He might not go to church with us, and it was dull staying alone. He knew, from our manner, when the day came, and without waiting for us to go, would take himself off in advance of the church-going hour. Sometimes he would pass the day with his friend and neighbor, Don, the only dog acquaintance he cultivated; but oftener, when the season favored, he would resort to the creeks and hunt muskrats, and bring them home for us to see. He might have dug them out of their holes, but probably he caught them swimming, being able to swim faster than they could.

One morning he was dead. We had noticed, the evening before, that he seemed languid and spiritless; but the day had been excessively hot, and we thought nothing of it. Alas! poor Franco! How often has a human being been mourned less sincerely, if not less worthily, than you! So fine-tempered, intelligent, companionable,—with some amusing oddities,—we shall not soon, nor often, see your like.

We continued to hear from Jerry occasionally. A friend of Mrs. C., Mrs. North, took such a liking to him that she gave him to her. Our last intelligence of him came in a letter from Mrs. C., from which the following is an extract :

“ Jerry has departed. The fire of his spirit was unquenched to the last, but his bodily infirmities were so great that they pained the hearts of his friends; yet not a thought had they but that he must be kept and cherished in the family. But at length his sufferings increased so much that it became evident that *Jerry must retire*. And now, what would be the most easy and honorable mode of his exit? A family consultation was held, and it was decided that an opiate should be administered, and that he should be shot by an expert marksman; which was done.

“ Gertrude, the only daughter at home, was about to make a visit to Greenfield, and told them that the deed must be done while she was away; and that when she came home she never wished to hear his name mentioned, she should feel so badly. But immediately upon her return, she proposed that the name of the new dog should be changed, and that it should be *Jerry*. She has just visited us, and in speaking of it, she

said she was glad his name was *not* changed, for he had not the qualities that Jerry had,—that he never would be the dog that Jerry was,—that Jerry was ‘*a remarkable dog*;’—upon which I observed she had especial use for her handkerchief. Helen laughed at her heartily, and told her that she had several times heard her speak of Jerry, and she always ended with tears, and ‘Jerry was a remarkable dog.’ Gertrude was his faithful nurse, when he was almost killed in that sally upon the big dog. [Not the ferocious itinerant before mentioned, but another of his class.] No doubt Jerry would have thought his life well sacrificed, if he could but have beaten that big dog.”





XVIII.  
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BIRDS.



EVERY intelligent country boy is, to a certain extent, and in his way, an Audubon. He will make you a catalogue of some dozens of birds, and will tell you all about most of them. He will not do it in a scientific way, like a professed ornithologist; for it is not as a savant that he has noticed them, but only as a curious, observant boy. It is only so that I shall speak of a number of them here.

Birds enliven our country homes. While I am writing these lines, flashes of light are thrown in upon me from their wings, flitting past my windows. At day-break they charm us with their music, and again at evening; and all day they are about us, with their affairs and chattering. These may be called the homestead birds; they like to be among human dwellings. In the fields and woods we have others of different kinds; and about the waters, others still; so that

everywhere, and in great variety, we have their company.

A large portion of them come and go with the seasons. These are the summer birds. The winter birds stay with us the year round. And they contribute much to the pleasantness of the season of frost and snows. I do not say they abate the dreariness of the winter months; for those months, wisely used, are not dreary in the country; they are delightful.

The bluebirds, forerunners of the spring, are the earliest to come. We announce their arrival to each other,—“The bluebirds are come,”—as we do other good news. We are glad to see them. I have dates of the times of their appearance here in Connecticut; which in some years was in the end of February, but more often not till about the middle of March. Even then they are too early for their comfort, in most instances. There will be deep snows and cold winds coming later than that; for March will generally be March to the end of its portion of the calendar, and, not content with that, will often supplement itself with a tedious page from April. We look out at our windows then, and say, “The poor bluebirds.” They betake themselves to such shelters

as they may find, and we see no more of them till a sunny morning welcomes them abroad again.

Next come the robins. Others follow these, till all the families and tribes are here. The latest are the swallows. These are obliged to defer their coming until the season is well advanced, because of the way they live; their food consisting of insects floating in the air, which they catch flying. Of all seasons the dog-days appear to be their harvest-time,—those hot insect-breeding days,—and it continues till the autumn frosts destroy their game. And of all hours, the evening twilight appears to be their favorite one. You will see them skimming the air, with great activity, between sundown and dark. They are taking their supper then. How keen their eye must be, to see and catch upon the wing, and in the dusk, so small an object as the mote which they are after! Would we that our eyes were as acute and microscopic as theirs? The wish were an unwise one; for so we should see more and other things than would be agreeable.

The robin begins to sing with the first faint dawn of the day. If, awaking while it is but

faintly light, I am doubtful whether it is morning, the robin's song assures me that it is. Most birds wait till broader day before they commence. I know of but one that is earlier than the robin. You will hear the little hair-bird trilling, in his small, brief way, long before day-break; and his notes are so soft and plaintive that you might imagine he was lonesome, or had rested poorly, and was weary of the night.

The robin sings but little in the middle of the day, being busy then about his food and nest-building, or, later in the season, in caring for his mate and young ones; but towards evening he renews his melodies, and sings the day out, as he sings it in. So ought we all to do, and so we may, if we have an innocence and a trust like the robin's.

The cat-bird has no particular time of day for singing; he sings whenever he is in the humor for it, or has a few minutes' leisure,—sings snatches of tunes, if he has not time for more. He will often give expression to his gladness in his melodies, when the sun shines out again after a soft summer shower. He is the sweetest of all our homestead warblers. The wood-thrush may excel him; but I do not reckon the thrushes

among the homestead birds, they being birds of the bush. He sings with more spirit than the robin, with more varied notes, and with a great deal of emotion,—if action be evidence of emotion. The robin sits still, and sings like an automaton or a music-box ; the cat-bird accompanies his song with lively movement of his body and wings.

The cat-bird has three voices ; his cat-like call (whence his name) ; his cluck, which appears to be conversational, and meant, like his *mcw*, for his mate only ; and his song, which is for all who care to hear. The robin has but two, a peep, and a song.

The quail is an interesting bird. Not for his plumage, or his music ; for he is neither beautiful nor musical ; though he has a kind of plaint which may pass for a warble, or a song. He lives about the farm, but is no thief, or poacher, on it, as too many birds are, one is sorry to say. He will not rob you of your cherries, like the robin ; nor pull up your sprouting corn like the crow ; nor waste and steal your green corn, like the blackbird ; nor waylay your bees at the hive, like the king-bird ; but he feels at liberty to glean in your stubble-field, and will sometimes venture into your barn-yard.

Quails interest me by their habits. They appear to have a peculiar fondness for the domestic state, or, at least, a longer-lasting love for it than other birds have. Most birds dismiss their young from their care and company as soon as they are old enough to leave the nest, and help themselves; but the quail family keep together all through the season, not separating, I think, before the pairing-time of the next year. You see a flock of them, a dozen, or more, rise from the ground, fly a little way, and light down again: that is a family of quails. They always fly low, in a kind of a hurried, hovering way, like hens. They have not lightness of form and strength of wing for a high flight, or a long one. Hence they cannot be migratory. We see them quite late in the season, after snows come, and I think they stay the winter through, finding, during the extreme rigors of it, such retreats and shelters as birds know of better than we. He that feeds them shelters them. Familiar as they are to us, and we to them, about our grounds, they are always wild and timid. I never heard of one of them being tamed. They will sometimes allow you to come within a few yards of them without flying, only running and



skulking. If you come suddenly upon a young brood of them, they will set up a peeping and run in alarm and hide themselves in the grass, or bushes, like chickens that are too big for their mother's wings to cover them. One thing I have to remember with regret in reference to this sort of birds: I used to set snares and traps for them, and was delighted with my success in taking them. The snares, catching them by the neck, strangled them. That was a cruel way. The trap, which was an open shallow box, set with a figure four, dropped over them without hurting them; but being so wild and timid by nature, they were in a wonderful fright, and uttered cries of terror, when I put my hands in to take them out. They are excellent food, and it is no doubt lawful to kill them for that use, if needed for it; but, for myself, I would now rather see them in the fields, and be hungry than see them on my table.

The quail has a kind of whistling note which is thought to resemble the words "*more wet*;" and some people regard this as prognostic of rain. But I think that careful note-takers of the weather will tell you, that, like many other signs, it signifies nothing reliable,—nothing un-

less this, that birds, like all sensitive air-breathing creatures, feel the effects of atmospheric changes, and have their ways of showing their consciousness of them, whether it be before a storm, or in, or after one. If this in them foretokens wet, or other weather, so, often, do the sensations and behavior of human people.

The blue jay, used to be and still is, one of my favorites. His plumage is of the gayest. His proud crest, which he wears with spirit, lowering and elevating it at will, would befit the cap of a high military officer. His voice is less soft than the flute's, it is true, but it is loud, clear and startling, and, to my ear, decidedly musical;—heard oftenest on a still, sunny autumn day. His haunts are the woodlands, and he stays the winter through. Of the *genus corvus*, the naturalists say; but there is nothing corvine, or crow-like, about him, that I can see,—being no naturalist, however.

Those busy climbers (*scansores*) the woodpeckers, all the varieties of them, are pleasing birds. I love to watch them winding round trees, on a winter day, or a spring day, looking for insects, or larvæ, in the bark; and to hear the larger ones making the woods ring with

their rapid hammering on dry, or hollow trees. These are winter birds. All of them are pretty, some of them are beautiful. I would not willingly miss the woodpeckers from my early recollections, nor break off acquaintance with them now.

The whip-poor-will may be classed with our birds of song, or not, as people fancy. For myself, I used to feel that he enhanced the lonesomeness of a lonesome evening, or a lonesome place, more than he charmed a cheerful one,—that his song, if song it should be called, was too long kept up to be not wearisome, and that one at a time was better than two, or more of them. Two not far apart, vying with each other, like Menalcas and Damœtas, make themselves ridiculous,—singing the same tune, at the same pitch, but keeping no time. Where many of them are mingling their voices together, the effect is singular. So exactly alike, they seem like the same sound multiplied, or like so many echoes confounding each other. I remember a visit I made with one of my sisters to some friends in Cornwall. The house was on the edge of a wide circular valley,—hills on every side,—with here and there a dwelling. As evening

came on, the whole valley became vocal with whip-poor-wills. There must have been scores, if not hundreds of them ; it seemed a whip-poor-will camp meeting. The only young lady of the house proposed to give my sister a room which she had herself occupied, a front one over the portico ; but she feared she would be disturbed there by “ that tiresome whip-poor-will ” which had taken possession, she said, of their front steps for its singing-place. It came every night, after the lights were out, and kept coming, for all that she could do to drive it away. She had clapped and shouted, and pounded on the house ; she had carried up armfuls of wood to throw down at it. All in vain. It would go off for a little while, and then be back again *whip-poor-willing* away as long as it liked. My sister, amused at the idea of such a contest, accepted the room ; but came down laughing in the morning, confessing a defeat ; for her serenader, she said, was fresh and wakeful, and she tired. Do not judge the bird severely ; there are just such human visitors,—always back again upon your door-stone, in spite of the plainest intimations that you would prefer to be alone.

The whip-poor-wills of the whole valley kept

up their grand choral performances till about midnight, when, with one consent, they ceased; and then, all at once, the air was full of night-hawks, — *jar, jar, jar*, like so many spinning-wheels in the heavens; and these held on till day-break. They may have been catching fireflies, in their swoops.

The brown thrasher, one of the wide-spread thrush family, a fine singer, is of about the robin's size, but more gracefully moulded, and more active. I have to relate an incident which befell one of these birds. I had heard of birds being charmed by snakes, but supposed this to be an imaginary notion. The fact that snakes did sometimes gorge themselves with birds was hardly to be questioned. A man told me that he found one in a snake that he killed which was so large that it was a wonder how the reptile ever got it down his throat, the bird being whole and unmasticated. In fact, he had not got it more than half-way down his gullet, and was so bulged out and deformed by it, that he could hardly crawl, and was the more easily killed. But how does the snake catch the bird? Does he coil himself and spring at it, as his manner is with an enemy? I saw one some yards up a

tree, his tail twined round the body of it, and his head resting on a limb; he could not coil and spring then, if birds were his object, as not improbably they were. The incident I have alluded to was this. Passing along the sunny edge of a wood, I was arrested by a brown thrasher that was acting very singularly. It was hopping about on the ground, with its feathers ruffled, uttering cries apparently of distress. I wondered what ailed it, but directly I saw a large black snake a few yards from it, lying at its full length, with its small, piercing eyes fixed upon it, and its forky tongue playing in its mouth. The bird would hop toward it and from it, and to this side and that, and on its scaly back for an instant, but all the while with its head towards it. It was evidently terrified, but seemed unable to fly from the object of its dread. I looked on for some minutes, and then broke the charm by throwing stones at the snake; which glided into the bushes, while the bird found his wings, and flew away. Now this, if any, may be taken as an instance of a snake-charmed bird. But what was the nature of the charm? Evidently it was that kind of stupefaction, that utter loss of self-possession, which sudden and extreme fear pro-

duces. The bird was beside itself through surprise and terror. Just so charmed, fascinated, lost to all self-helpfulness, are men, sometimes. Read accounts of people that are killed on railroads, for instance ; some of whom have survived the shock long enough to tell us that they saw the danger, were perfectly aware of it, but were so surprised and stupefied by it, that they had no mental power to save themselves by stepping off the track, if they were on it, or by pulling a rein, if they were in a carriage, but stood stock-still, or drove madly on, as the case might be, in spite of whistle, bell, and shouting. And here let it not seem out of place to remark, that the training of children to a habit of entire self-possession, under all circumstances, is of no slight importance as a part of their education.

Snakes are such hateful and disgusting things, that I do wrong to mix them in with the better company of birds, as I have done ; but we have the charmed bird's deliverance for compensation.

◀ I confess a partiality for the crow ; or, rather, I have little of the common prejudice against him. He is with me a *character*. I like his slow, solemn way of flying ; it amuses me. I like his grave and stately gait. I like his "caw," which

has, for him and his fellows, a social, if not a musical significance. Perhaps he uses it as a signal, to let his people know that he is on his way, or where he is. I like his suspiciousness and cunning better than I like those qualities in human kind ; or, at least, I dislike them less. I cannot say that I admire his dietetic tastes in all particulars. Perhaps I have some pity for his leanness ; since that is proverbially his actual condition, if it be not his normal one. "As poor as a crow." There is beauty in his jet black, glossy coat. The social habits of his kind amuse me. Observe the straggling, wide-apart way in which they fly, when a number of them are passing over together ; than which nothing looks more unsociable ; yet hear how vivaciously and noisily they caw together, when they congregate at some rendezvous of theirs, such as a woody hill-top, where they like to rest awhile, or some great swamp, where they sleep. The crow is about the shyest of all birds naturally ; it is difficult to get a shot at him ; but once tame him, and get his confidence, and he is afraid of nothing. He will fly in at your window, light on your table, or on the book you are reading, caw in your face, and fly out again. Children



can make a playmate of him. Curious things are told of the crow, tamed and wild. He is on bad terms with the farmer; he steals his corn. It is true, he makes some compensation for his larcenies; he destroys grubs and other creatures of the ground that are injurious to crops. But the cultivator is not satisfied with this; he regards and treats him as a thief, a depredator, simply, and takes a variety of methods with him. If he can but once get at him with his gun and shoot him, he makes an example of him by hanging him up in the field. He dresses up scarecrows to frighten him. You may have sometimes seen a white string stretched from post to post round a field. The theory of such festooning is this: it is the manner of the crow to light upon the fence and look about a little, before descending to the ground; he cannot light on the string, and is, besides, suspicious of it, and so keeps off.

The crow has a persecutor in the kingbird. You will see a pair of these birds, and sometimes three or four of them, chasing him from one hill-top to another, all the while pouncing on him, and picking his back and wings. He is exceedingly worried by them, and makes a loud, angry caw every time they touch him. He

lights on a tree to get rid of them ; they light on another and wait for him to start again. He can neither escape from them nor punish them, because of their superior lightness and activity. They would not dare to pester a hawk so. Sometimes a crow is picked so bare and sore by them, and is so tired, that he can fly no longer. One of our men found one in that pitiable plight, and brought it home to us to show. It was not able to rise from the ground. What the motive of the kingbird is, my reader can divine as well as I. Perhaps they like the excitement of the chase, and make a frolic of it. More probably they dislike the crow in their neighborhood, and mean to clear the coast of him, being afraid of him for their eggs and nestlings ; for, among the many bad things he is charged with, one is that he is a despoiler of the nests of the small birds.

The panic among birds and hens which the hawk produces is worthy of observation as an instance of a fear which is purely one of instinct. The hens and the birds may have never seen a hawk, may know nothing of his character by observation or experience, yet let but the shadow of one of those sharks of the air fall on them, and instantly the birds fly to some retreat and

are as hush as death, while the hen gives an alarm which her chickens understand, and they run for shelter under her wings.

It was in connection with a panic of this kind that a mischance happened to our neighbor, old Mr. Heathcote, a veteran hunter. Coming home from one of his fowling excursions on horseback, he heard his hens squalling as he approached the house, and saw the hawk sailing around over his head. Leaning back in the saddle, he pointed his gun at it, fired, lost his balance, and fell over backwards to the ground, much to the amusement of his family, who ran out to see. Neither the marksman nor the hawk was hurt.

I adverted to the blackbirds in speaking of the meadow. Such multitudes of them as we then had, settling on a field of unripe corn, would make sad work of it. I was often set to watch them. It was tedious business, sitting on a knoll or a rock for a watch-tower, dreaming day-dreams and whittling; making corn-stalk fiddles, and wishing they had more music in them, or mimic boats, and wishing they were ships, and I on board of them,—always wishing. Sometimes I had the dog for company, and for help also, for he would run in and bark among the birds; and

sometimes a gun, but with powder only, till I was old enough to be trusted with a pouch of shot, too. No place was lonesome with a dog, nor tiresome with a gun. My brother and I made clack-mills to scare the thieves ; but there must be wind to work them, and often the winds would sleep while the birds were awake.

The red-winged blackbirds are beautiful for their crimson, epauletted shoulders. No two colors could be more finely contrasted than their deep red and their glossy jet. These are a distinct species, less numerous than the one above mentioned ; the crow blackbirds are another, and the swamp blackbirds, of a rusty black, another still.

Perhaps there is no bird that more fills a young imagination than the owl. I suspect that any child with an illustrated copy of the Burial of Cock Robin in his hand will tell you so. His grotesque appearance ; his solitariness ; his suspicious, if not culpable, love of the night rather than the day ; his hootings ;—these, and such like things, make the shape and coloring of the picture he has to sit for. I remember being out alone in my boyhood, on a solitary hill-top, in the middle of a profoundly still summer night—

it so happened to me—listening to one of them :—Who-oo ! who-oo !—I stood and hearkened with a feeling that might be called romantic.

The screech-owl has nothing commendable about him, that I know of ; or certainly he is not a praiseworthy character on the whole. Nothing is more sinister than his look and attitude, in a state of repose ; and his deeds agree with this. His screechings at night are execrable. I know of nothing comparable to them, except the screechy, screamy way in which some ladies sing, telling us it is artistic. It is said for him, that he catches mice in barns. That may be true ; for he gets into barns, often, and dozes away the day there ; but his merits in that particular are more than balanced by his demerits in others : he gets into hen-roosts and dove-cots, too. We had a dove-house full of the most beautiful varieties of doves—white, buff-colored and changeable, fan-tailed and pantaletted. One morning we noticed that they were all out upon the roofs of the house and barn, with their necks stretched, and looking very wild. I went into the dove-house to see what the matter was ; and there, squat in a corner, I found a screech owl—a *barn-owl*, to give him his laudatory title as a

mouse-killer. I had a pet dove, among the rest. That lay dead, with a hole in its breast. I secured Mr. Screech, and, without compunction, applied the *lex talionis* to him, life for life. The doves' home was spoiled for them. They had been a happy family, but now they quit their house, and would never enter it again.

Contrast these owl voices—the hootings and the screechings, with the voices of smaller, gentler birds,—the liquid voice of the chewink, the soft notes of the phæbe, the lively chatter of the chickadee, and most of all, the plaintive cooing of the turtle dove.

The turtle-dove is one of the most interesting of birds, the very personification of gentleness and modesty; seen in pairs, never in flocks, and rather rarely seen at all; loving the deep seclusion of the woods.

I have an anecdote to give of the chewink. We had a hen with chickens. Being a barn-yard fowl, she thought she had, of course, the freedom of the barn-yard. But as often as she went into it she hastened out again in great excitement, with her feathers erect, throwing her head this way and that as if she was dodging something, and clucking her brood along as fast as she could.

What was the matter? Why, a Mrs. Chewink had made her nest on a low branch of a pear-tree that overhung the yard, and, being ignorant of the character of Madam Hen, and concerned for the safety of her young ones, was scaring her off by flying at and chasing her, and threatening to pick out her eyes.

The waterfowls give interest to the localities which are their haunts. You see the wild ducks paddling and diving in the creeks and flooded marshes; the stilted crane and heron, wading along the channel banks and flats; the bold, shot-defying kingfisher, watching from his wharf-post, or hovering over the water for a dive; and sometimes the wild geese, descending from their long and hungry flight to rest and feed a little on the river.

There was a fowl, lean and long, sometimes seen, but not often, in our fens and wet meadows, which people called the *stake-driver*, from the sound it made; which was like that of the driving of a stake into hollow or quaggy ground with an axe. It was curious to hear.

An ornithological collection for a museum, needs not only the birds themselves for its completeness, but their nests and eggs. Their in-

instincts are shown in their nests. We see in these, foresight, contrivance, adaptation, skill, taste; and if human hands had made them we should say they were evidence of mind. But we observe that each individual builds like every other individual of its species, and each species after a fashion of its own; and that this they do season after season, devising nothing new, borrowing nothing from each other, making no improvements,—blindly following, in short, a fixed law. And herein is the difference between instinct and mind: mind invents; instinct does not. There is mind concerned in the case, but it is a higher intelligence than that of the birds.

Different birds select different situations for their nests, and construct them in different ways, and of different materials, according to the habits and requirements of their respective kinds. Some build on trees; some in and under bushes; some, under shelving rocks; some, in holes which they find, or peck for themselves, in old trees; some, in barns; some in chimneys; some, in the open, bare ground; some, in the face of high banks; some, the water birds, large and small, upon unfrequented islands, or other undisturbed localities in the vicinity of waters.



Suppose we examine a few of their nests, and see how they are made.

Here is one of the robin's; I find it on an apple-tree near the house. It is composed of coarse materials, to begin with, such as strong stems of grass. These are mixed with mud, or clay; which holds them together, and gives shape and firmness to the structure, or, rather, the straw holds the clay together and keeps it in place till the sun dries and hardens it, as the straw and stubble did in the brick-making in Egypt. This is the foundation. Then the lining. This is made with fine dried grass, or anything that is soft and warm.

The frame of the little hair-bird's nest is of fine fibrous roots dextrously woven together. The lining is of hair, of which barn-yards and stables afford an abundant supply. Long horse-hairs, from the mane, or tail, work in, in coils, nicely. It is this hair-work that gives the bird its name. There is no prettier nest than this. The apple-tree appears to be this bird's favorite place for building.

The hang-bird, or Baltimore oriole, suspends her nest from a pensile twig at the extreme end of a high branch; the elm being often chosen for

her purpose. It is made of fine, pliant materials, and is in shape like a silk purse with an opening in its side. It is a curious thing, so snug and cozy, and so airily and gracefully placed. Every breeze rocks the hang-bird's cradle, and a proper lullaby for her would be that old one, "Rock-a-by, baby, on the tree-top," which used to be sung to our little ones.

The barn-swallows make their nests of stiff, adhesive mud, or clay, attaching them to beams and rafters, and lining them with feathers, producing mud-wall cottages luxuriously furnished. I have often sent a feather off upon the wind to see them chase it. Sometimes two or three would be after it together.

The chimney-swallow's nest is a very rude and cheap affair, of coarse, short sticks, as big as pipe stems, gummed together and to the flue; in shape like the half of a tea-saucer, with no lining; as ribbed as a gridiron; as black as soot. These are the chimney-sweeps among birds, as their cousins, the bank-swallows, are the delvers. Their dress, which is black, or blue-black, is suited to the profession.

It is a fit description of the crow's nest to say, that it is a common synonym for brush-heap.

The eagle's is like the crow's, but larger and of larger timber.

Such of the birds as require soft linings for their nests, are sharp and eager in their search for stuffs for them. They will pick up bits of thread, slack-twisted strings, shreds and clippings made by scissors, and all similar things, as well as soft dried grasses. And if you have any small, delicate article of dress to dry, or bleach, it behooves you to see that it is not made off with. A lace collar which my sister Alice had put out thus, was gone when she went for it. She charged it to the birds: and, to substantiate the charge, she put some slips of muslin in the same place, and these she saw them take. Yet they do not, to my knowledge, steal the stuffs they want from each other's nests. It might be convenient for the swallow to appropriate to herself the feathers of a neighbor swallow's nest; or for the cat-bird to take the robins; but this does not appear to be consistent with their ideas of good morals and good neighborhood. But to take things which belong to human kind is with them another affair. I used to tie our raspberry canes and grape-vines with coarse strings and candle-wicking, and wondered who untied them

and carried off the bindings, till I discovered that the birds did it. You may propose to compound with them, or buy them off, as I have often done, by tying handfuls of cotton to the stakes and lattices, for their preference and use ; but you get nothing by this ; they carry off your cotton, strings and all, and untie your vines besides.

The social affinities and habits of the feathered tribes are worthy of observation.

A flock of birds is a social company. Such of them as do not live, or move, in flocks, still like to be in communities, or neighborhoods, of their kind. They sustain, with constancy, the separateness of their species, being no amalgamationists. You never see a flock comprising different sorts. Even such as are of the same genus, almost of the same species, and of similar modes of living, as the different kinds of swallows, and of ducks, avoid all mixing with each other. Within their own kinds they have sympathies as well as affinities. If you catch a young robin, not fully weaned, not only its parents will be alarmed by its cry, but all the neighbor robins will come fluttering and peeping around you in wild distress. The migratory birds come and go in companies. They often congregate in very

large flocks, on the eve of a movement of this kind. I saw a line of swallows not less than an eighth of a mile long, and as straight as an arrow, flying high in the air, in single file and close order, going southwesterly, or parallel with the coast, being a migratory company, of course. And one curious thing they did; passing over a brook, every one of them, in its turn, beginning with the foremost, dropped down to it in an easy curve, like that of a festoon, and just dipped its bill in it, rippling it with its wings, and rose again to its place in the line. It was an exceedingly graceful and beautiful movement. Who appointed the rendezvous for those birds? Who sent out the word? Who marshalled them, designated their leader, and made the sign that put them in motion? Or did they commence the flight with a few, and receive accessions by the way?



XIX.

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STUDIES IN THE WOODS.





THERE are few people who do not find something to interest them in woods. Some, as the botanist and the artist, resort to them for ends pertaining to their professions: the majority go for recreation only; they find a "pleasure in the pathless woods," and not much besides,—not suspecting how much they have around them for profitable and pleasing study. Solomon "spake of trees." It is probable that he wrote a treatise on them, and that he added the general science of botany to his dendrology; for he spake of trees "from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall." Trees, then, must be a proper subject for any one's study. Trees and woods are the subject of this chapter.

I do not propose a treatise, in the manner of the naturalist, as I did not in speaking of birds and cattle; but shall make some every-day ob-

servations on them, which may, perhaps, be useful to young readers in their woodland excursions.

The twilight of the woods is pleasing. The twilight which the day leaves behind it is everywhere the same; this of the woods is uneven; there is deep dusk in some places, faint shade in others.

The colors around you there are a study. No two masses of leaves are tinged alike: one is gray; another silvery; another pale yellow; another golden; and there are many intermediate tints and shadings. These are the effects of the sunbeams that stream down through openings in the leafy canopy above, or are strained through where the spread of leaves is thin. The sun is a great artist in lights, shades, and colors, and delights to show his work in woods and groves. With what a glory he lights them up at evening!

And then, besides these transient sunbeam paintings, the different kinds of trees differ in the natural color of their foliage. The pale willow's green is not the green of the oak; the rusty poplar's is not that of the maple, or the beech; nor the hemlock's that of the darkest of the evergreens.

The shapes of trees present you with another study. I refer to the forms which the different kinds naturally take. The tall cedar, the stately pine, the arching elm, the pointed cypress, the spheroidal beech, the sprawling shrub oak, the pensile weeping willow, drooping to the ground, and the rest, grow in shapes peculiar to themselves, and by these shapes alone would be distinguishable, though other marks were wanting to them.

These marks, with other distinctive qualities of trees, are worth knowing, and properly belong to studies in the woods. Almost every country boy of ordinary wakefulness and curiosity, and fond of woodland rambles, can point them out to you. That city people should be unacquainted with them is not surprising; but I know of those whose homes are, and always have been, in the country, and to whom the knowledge would be practically valuable, who, beyond the mere shades before their houses, cannot tell one sort of tree, or wood, from another;—who, if they ordered and paid for a cord of oak, or hickory, would not know they were cheated, if a cord of chestnut, or poplar, were brought them instead. Ladies, in particular, are liable to these imposi-

tions. For the benefit of such, then, let me say, that, on the cart, you may distinguish one kind from another by the bark, and by the color and the grain, or fibre, of the wood. The standing tree is known by its leaf, its shape, and its bark. In most cases the foliage alone sufficiently designates it.

The leaves,—the dress of trees,—are worthy of notice as objects of taste and curiosity. Go through the woods and pluck a sample leaf of each kind, and, laying them before you, make a little study of them. You may arrange them in classes, if you like, under the descriptive terms of the botanist; as, ovate, lanceolate, palmate, and so forth. You find great differences among them,—varieties of shape, size, shade, texture, and *finish*. No two of them are just alike, yet, in some cases the differences are so delicate that you have to look again before you perceive them. Some of them have the gloss of the finest varnish; others are coarse, rough, and slovenly. Some are sallow, while others are so deeply and healthfully green that it might do an invalid good to look at them. Bruise them, and their smells are different. In their shapes they furnish patterns for every kind of sylvan ornamen-

tation, in paintings, carvings, carpets, chintzes, and embroidery. If you know them in the woods, you will love them as acquaintances in these artistic connections.

For completeness of information, one might catalogue the woods, making a synopsis of all the kinds of trees he finds in them ; noting, at the same time, their respective uses and worth, the soils and situations they naturally elect, their comparative longevity, and other facts worthy to be remarked. If he have some regard to method, he will set such as have family resemblances and names together on his list ; as, for instance, the oaks, of which there were, as I remember, as many as eight varieties, or species, in our Derwent woods ; all acorn-bearers, genuine oaks, though differing from each other. The hickories, as closely related as the oaks, and for aught I know, equally numerous or more so, will fill another large place in the list ; the evergreens another ; the willows and the poplars, others ; and so on down to triplets, couples and individuals.

The grains and colors of woods are worthy of any one's studious attention. They are the more so because of the imitations of them by house-painters. The church I attend is grained in oak ;

and the graining is as well done, I think, as is the average of such work. I cannot say it pleases me very well; it falls so short of the real. I am not sure that I should not like any one of the hard woods unpainted better than I like this or any imitation. The pews of the old meeting-houses were unpainted, and no one felt that they were not nice and respectable. Indeed, for my part, I should say, eschew the grainer's paint and varnish, and pew your church with the veritable oak, or some other respectable, truth-speaking wood.

Age in the tree, and time with the timber, deepens the richness of the beautiful kinds of wood: the old is finer than the young and the new. Some picture-frames which I looked at lately, made from one of the beams of an old church which had been taken down, are much more finely hued than they could have been, fresh-made at the time the church was built; which was more than a hundred years before. I have an article made from an old oak,—fabulously old,—which for fineness of fibre and richness of color, I have hardly seen surpassed by any wood, in whatever country grown. It is a cane made from the famous Charter Oak of Connecti-

cut. The head, secured with a silver fillet, is from a timber, also oak, and beautifully grained, saved from Washington's house at Mount Vernon while repairs were making on it, under the auspices of ladies, a few year since. My cane, therefore, is not of sapling nor of vulgar origin.\*

Formerly, chestnut was highly esteemed for ornamental uses. Time hardens it, and gives it

\* I went to look at the old oak once when I was young, being in Hartford. It impressed me greatly with its venerableness; it was the Methuselah of the old woods world. A few days since, I addressed some inquiries concerning it to a friend in Hartford, and he gives me the following particulars:

"The old oak fell in a gale of wind, August 21st, 1856;"—which was one hundred and seventy years after it was made the depository of the charter. Its age could not be accurately ascertained: it was estimated to be a thousand years. It is said that when the ground on which it stood was cleared (1638) for the residence of Governor Wyllys, the Indians begged that this old tree might be spared, saying that it had been "the guide of their ancestors for centuries," and "when its young leaves appeared in the spring-time, they knew that their corn should be planted." The heart of the main trunk had decayed till only a thin rim of it was left, when it fell; but, from the branching out of the limbs, it was sound. It was of the white oak species, and was full of leaves and young acorns. It was thirty-three feet in circumference at the base.

On its fall, the bells were tolled, by order of the Mayor, and on the ground on which it had stood a band of music played a funeral dirge.

The wood of it was all saved, and has been "wrought into mementoes of friendship," my correspondent says, "in a thousand forms." To what finer uses than these of sentiment and friendship could it have been hallowed?

the dark, rich color of the nut it bears. It takes a fine polish. You will see polished floors of it, and, I think, wainscots and other work, in houses built by old grandees of England; and in the earliest-built dwellings of this country that made some pretensions to style, it was used, more or less, in their best rooms. More recently, it seems to have given place, in cabinet-makers' shops, to mahogany and black walnut; but now I notice it again in their ware-rooms, and see it mentioned in their advertisements.

The cedar, particularly the white cedar, is admirable for its grandeur as a tree. It grows large and high, and lives to a great age. It is remarkable for its durability, as timber, and for the permanency of its fragrance. The reader is presumed to know all this; but I must give an instance. Shingles of this wood, taken from an old house seventy years ago, and used as siding on one which was then new, are still in good condition, and likely to last, no one can say how long; and they are almost, if not quite, as fragrant as the new wood. What can science tell us of a substance (if it be a substance) so subtile as an odor which can spend itself constantly for a century, and not be exhausted?



I think we have no other native wood that resists time and the weather like the heart of the red cedar. An old gentleman showed me a post standing at the edge of a tide-water near his house,—he moored his boat to it,—which he knew had been there sixty years; and there was no appearance of decay about it yet.

There are trees which are of small account for timber, shade, fruit, or fuel, and which you nevertheless like to see, for some quality they have. The dogwood is one of these. It bears a profusion of large, showy, dusky-white, innocent-looking blossoms, vandyke-shaped; and, as it blows early, before the general leafing out of the woods is sufficiently advanced to hide it, you see it, blinking between the trees, at a considerable distance. It might be likened to a rustic tricked out in his smartest for a holiday. As for its fruit, the dogwood cherry, it is called eatable, but I suspect that most people, after tasting, would think it better thrown away than swallowed.

The poplar is another of these good-for-little, yet interesting trees of the wood. The tremulousness of the aspen, which is a species of the poplar, is proverbial. You may stand and look at it, when the stillness of the air is such that

there is not the slightest waving of the grass, or grain, nor the slightest ripple on the water, nor the least stir of leaves on other trees, and every leaf of the aspen will be quivering. Woodman, spare the poplar.

It is not my purpose to recommend particular trees for shade or other uses, but I must say a word in behalf of the butternut ; which *selon moi*, is one of the pleasantest trees to have near one's house. It is a prettier tree than the ailanthus, which, in appearance, it resembles. I have no respect for the ailanthus ; the odor of whose blossoms is said to be unwholesome ; which litters the ground with its ugly seed-pods, and is a pest by its rapid self-propagation. I would not intercede for it with the axe-man, though it were a native of our own woods, as it is not. The butternut is a clean and wholesome tree. The smell of its leaves is agreeable. I have a sprig of it on my table now. The nut, if gathered while green-enough, makes a good pickle. The thin wavering shadow of this tree does not blight vegetation under it, as other shades do ; on the contrary, it aids it by fertilizing the soil by the oiliness of its past years' fallen leaves. You will never see an old butternut without observing the pecu-

liar greenness of the grass beneath it. You need not go to the woods for a sapling to set out ; plant the nut ; it grows rapidly. Plant it in your garden,—or by your house, and you will soon have a beautiful tree, and nuts to crack.

I must not dismiss the trees without some notice of the rate and manner of their growth. They grow straight and tall in the woods, because there they must, for want of room to spread themselves. This is a good consequence as it regards some of their uses. If long, straight timbers are wanted, for frames, keels, spars, we find them in the woods. In open situations they develop themselves more in branches,—form lower and heavier heads. And this I suppose to be their normal state. I remember a white-oak on our Derwent farm, under whose branches, which almost touched the ground, a hundred neats might have stood together, or perhaps lain down and ruminate, if amicably disposed. A party of students, rambling afield, came, as I remember, to a pine of such vast dimensions,—so many branched and so high,—that they could but throw themselves down and gaze up into it with admiration ; and one of them, in his enthusiasm, climbed up into it like a squirrel,

and was out of sight, at times, amid its airy foliage.

As to rates of growth, these of course differ in different trees. There are some that grow up soon, like Jonah's gourd, and soon die. But the slow-growing, and the long-living, are not as slow as some people think; which I hold it benevolent to say, inasmuch as there are people who will refuse to plant a tree, particularly a fruit-tree, because it will never come to anything in their day, they think. Poor observers these, as well as selfish. An old lady at the age of seventy, planted a pear-seed, and lived to eat of the fruit from it for years. Look at the chestnut, the pine, the ash, or any tree in the first year of its appearance among the dry leaves of the woods. It will take an age, one might say, for that thing to get up to treehood, judging from its beginning. But watch it and you will see it shooting up with increasing stretches from year to year. Now you reckon its growth by inches; by and bye you will increase them by feet—yards—ells. Six years ago a quart cup would have covered that spruce which now looks in at your chamber window.

There are many things that are of interest in

the woods,—trees not only, but many things besides; the twining bitter-sweet, the gay kalmia, the sweet-smelling honeysuckle, the spicy sassafras and wintergreen, the acid sumac, the fragrant sweet-brier, the coronal blossoms of the tulip-tree, the pensile tags or tassels of the chestnut and other nut-bearing trees, clambering vines, creepers, berries, plants, mosses,—to say nothing of the furred and feathered people that have their homes in those sylvan haunts. If I had never been, or not often, in woods, I should resort to them as to a cabinet of minerals, or shells, or any museum of useful and curious things; and with the same desire for knowledge. There would be things for me to learn there which printed pages could not teach me, and forms, manifold and beautiful, of the Creator's work, which it were a kind of impiety not to see and admire.



XX.

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A NEW HOUSE.





A YOUNG family outgrows its house as a child does its clothes. Young people require larger accommodations than do little children. That was our case. Our father resolved, therefore, to build a new house.

The site chosen for it was a smooth level lot on the turnpike. We should lose a portion of our fine river view there, which we regretted; but a good piece of the Connecticut and all of the Little Derwent would still be open to us, and what we lost from our landscape would be balanced by other advantages in our new position.

And now for the plan and style of the new building; for it was but a castle in the air so long as these were not fixed on. There was no architect in the place. We had carpenters and joiners, but these knew little beyond the common use of tools, with some conceit of gingerbread-work. So, for want of a wiser head in

such a business, we young folks set ourselves to contrive and plan. We had, at least, a good pretext for amusing ourselves in that way. We had time enough,—all the leisure hours we could redeem from books and duties during the winter. We drew many first and second floors, and rude uprights, and, with our heads together and apart, used up much paper and candle-light. Our father amused himself with our essays and talk, without offering any suggestions of his own.

He was not specially skilled in house-planning, he said, “but, when we made a plan that suited us, he would see what he thought of it.”

One thing was settled in our minds at the outset; which was, that our house should not be like any other in Derwent, or elsewhere, that we knew of. There were good-enough houses in the place, it was true, and some that were large and costly; yet, though we had not thought of it before, there was not one that we quite liked,—that was faultless to the eye, and wholly satisfactory in its internal arrangements. And, besides, a house patterned exactly after another house had such a servile, imitative look, as if its builder had no “sconce” or “gumption” of his own; and if the imitated building had somewhat that was

original and peculiar about it, your copy of it would be a kind of plagiarism, a theft. And we liked, too, to see varieties in dwellings; we knew of nothing more cheap and stupid-looking than a street, or row of houses, all just alike—fac-similes of each other; or where two-thirds of the houses of a town, or village, were of the same fashion, differing only in size; as was the case up in Hexam, we remarked. Our house must have a character of its own; not a pretentious, but a distinctive one, as a matter of good taste. Externally, it must be symmetrical, graceful, agreeable to the eye; essentially and always agreeable, so that if you passed and looked at it a thousand times, you would not weary of it. Internally, it must be so convenient, and in such perfect taste, that there could be no wish to alter a single thing when you came to live in it!

We perceived by these efforts, that architecture was too high an art for uninstructed heads, and that many mistakes were made in dwellings, and much money misapplied, and much dissatisfaction and disgust incurred, by inexperienced and presumptuous contrivers and builders. Our studies gave an artistic turn, too, to our tastes and observations. We began to look at houses, and pictures

with houses in them, with the eye of the connoisseur and the critic. Our old house became a curiosity with us. We went all through it, from the cellar to the attic, and stood outside and looked at it, and, in imagination, made ourselves bystanders and lookers-on when it was planned and built, as if we had been the children, instead of great-grandchildren, of the builder; listening to the talk about the length and breadth of rooms, the height of ceilings, and the great chimney, that must take up so much precious room, in the middle of the house. And we concluded, as the result of our survey, that it was but a plain, unpretending domicile, but respectable for one of its date; and we were quite sure that few roofs had covered happier families than that had.

Our plan-drafting did not result in anything available: I suspect that nobody had supposed it would. It was an amusement and a study with us for a while, and was worth our time and pains. Meanwhile, our father engaged a man of another town to undertake the building in the spring, leaving the details of the contract to be determined by the style and plan that should be adopted. He was a man of experience and taste as a joiner, but of no pretensions as an architect.

Our principal Derwent joiner thought himself aggrieved by this: "it was too bad," he said, "that a job of the kind should be taken right from under his nose and given to a stranger." To save feeling, therefore, the contractor aforesaid proposed that he should come in and make a joint concern of it with him; and for the same reason my father consented. He was, besides being a neighbor, a good faithful man, and a strong hand at the more common kinds of work, but was opinionated, and of deprecable judgment in nice matters. "We called him Contractor Number Two."

Content with such a partnership, he set his wits at work to produce a plan for us; and he soon brought one which he fancied must be quite the thing. He left it for our inspection. It was a great, bulky, boxy thing, and much larger than we wanted. And such a roof! Mansard would have stared at it. The curb, or mansard roof, has great ease and gracefulness in some of its forms and relations, but nothing is more awkward than we sometimes see it,—an instance of which we had before us. I am afraid our remarks on the performance were not so considerate as, benevolently, they should have

been, with reference to the projector. "It would do to build ships in, and ought to be sent to a navy-yard." "It would make a great fire." "It only wants the hull of a vessel under it to be a Noah's Ark." To build such a house as that, to stand for generations and be known and spoken of as the "Chester Place"—that would be famous!

In these circumstances the "mother of invention" put us again—and in earnest now—upon trying what we could do; and with the aid of some works on architecture which we were so fortunate as to obtain, we produced a plan which all agreed, or allowed, to be satisfactory.

And here permit me to suggest to young people the great desirableness of some knowledge of this subject of architecture. They are all interested in having pleasant homes; and in seeing pleasant homes around them. They may have to plan them. And if they extend their acquaintance with the art beyond domestic dwellings, it will be a pleasure to them wherever there are beautiful and grand buildings for them to see.

In the spring the work commenced, and by mid-autumn the house was finished and ready to

receive us. The joiners had done their work well ; and so had the masons and the rest. But there had been some disputing of tastes between Contractor Number Two and us ; and also between him and his associate. Equally confident in his aesthetics with the other, and stronger-willed than he, the most that he would consent to, in a case of difference, would be to refer it to us. In one instance they compounded with each other thus : each of them would take one of two front rooms, and “do it off” in his own way. We did not object to this. Number Two had set his heart on it for his credit’s sake as a master workman ; and we could remove his meretricious ornamentation, if any there should be, after the house was finished. This to some extent we did ; a portion of his fancy-work being finer than we liked. Tastes differ.

At our first breakfast in our new house, Walter said he heard a tavern sign creaking on its hinges, and a stage-driver’s horn, in the night ; Lizzie said she awoke feeling that she was on a visit somewhere, she could not tell where ; and we all found, comparing notes, that we had felt more like lodgers in a strange dwelling, or at an inn,

than like sleepers at home. And for a first night's sleep, or a first day, or the first few days, in a new house, such a feeling of strangeness was not surprising ; but the impression was slow in leaving us. At first, everything was so "bran new,"—the rooms, most of the furniture, the pantries ;—though the girls had less of this feeling than their mother. And things outside were so bare. My sisters declared that "stepping out of door was stepping out into the open, staring, wide world ; for there was not a shade-tree, nor a shrub, nor a vine, nor any cultivated thing, to indicate a human dwelling." Of course not, girls. The house first, and then the shrubbery and trees. If these be already on the place, so much the better ; if not, they must be waited for until they grow.

We do not know, till taught by circumstances, how much is comprehended in that loved word, Home. There does not need an ejection, a fire, an ostracism, to teach us ; a mere removal does it. You build, or buy a house, and move into it, and call it home. It is a lodge, a shelter, a retreat. A home is more than that. The home feeling is a sentiment, and is the growth of time and many fond and delicate associations. You



cannot extemporize it, nor find it ready to your hand, to be quit-claimed to you for a consideration, along with houses and lands, in a deed.

We hardly felt like "folks at home" in our new house, at first, as I have said ; but we slowly grew into the feeling.

There is a pleasure in building in the country which you cannot have in the city ; you can surround your house with pleasant things,—shades, lawns, arbors, fruits,—things for the exercise of your skill and taste, and promotive of your health. It was too late in the season, when we moved, to do much at these ; but in the spring we made a busy scene of our new homestead. The shrubbery and flowers were my sisters' province, with such help as they might want from stronger hands than theirs. The kitchen garden was my father's hobby ; and a capital one he made of it. I, for my part, built an arbor for grapes, and planted around it three of the best of the many varieties our farm afforded. They were wild grapes, of course ; our Isabellas and other cultivated varieties, were not to be had. Hiram and I went with an ox-cart to a distant wood, and came home with forty fine young sugar maples ; and a hard day's work we had, getting them up,

their roots were so interlaced with the roots of other trees, and so bound down and hidden among rocks and stones. Meantime, my brother Walter, without any one's knowledge, and not suspecting what Hiram and I were about, went into a not distant field, and "backed home" two elms and a soft maple; and thought he had done a great thing till he saw what we had done. The elms were set immediately before the house, the maples along the road. Every one of them lived and flourished. We inclined to laugh at Walter's soft maple in comparison with our sugar maples; but he gave it a place by itself, and staked his credit upon its becoming a favorite with us. And so it did. It assumed the shapeliest of forms as it grew, and when touched by autumn frosts was the gayest of the line.

Shenstone observes that "the works of a person who builds, immediately begin to decay; while those of him who plants, begin directly to improve. In this, planting promises a more lasting pleasure than building." Those trees of ours are an instance of this. Hardly larger than bean-poles at their planting, and admirable for their size and vigor now, they are likely to be still

standing and growing when the house is gone,—unless some vandal axe cuts them down.

We did not quit the old house for the new one with a feeling of indifference for the old. It had been our home. Our parents had commenced their married life in it; one of them had been born in it, and so had all their children. It was easy to remove the furniture, but there was a something, undefinable, about it, which we could not take away with us. The dog wondered what we were about. He did not understand at once that he was to have no further duties as a house-dog on those premises, and that he must quit his favorite napping-place under the old willow.

The old house (and also the new) passed, long since from our ownership and name, as some of us have from the world; but those of us who survive still cherish an interest in it. Time and distance have not lessened, but have deepened our regard for it.

The feeling I am speaking of is as common as are remembered early homes. Long pilgrimages are made to gratify it. Men grown rich in cities, or abroad, come and buy back the old place, and

use their means and taste to embellish and preserve it. If the house itself has been taken down and removed, the home feeling still lingers, like an enchantment, upon the spot. Every vestige of it and its surroundings interests you. The well, with sweep and pole and curb gone ; the old elms, that used to shade the house, shading nothing now but the ground and one another ; the shrubbery, and the fruit-bearing bushes and vines, that spade and plough have spared, grown slovenly and straggling for want of a cultivating hand ; those trees, such as remain of them, old and moss-grown, under which you used to eat such delicious apples and pears ; that small pictured tile which was part of the mosaic that embellished the parlor fireplace ; that old rusty "copper," of the value of a farthing in its day, which you chance to find,—what relics and ruins, for you, are these !

It is of country homes that I am speaking, as the reader will perceive ; of city homes I cannot speak from personal knowledge, but I think the interest in them must be less, for reasons that might be given.

And why is it that we have this peculiar regard for our paternal home,—for that one roof

and hearth-stone, above all others? We may have had many homes, and pleasant ones, since, but we care for none of them as we do for that. The feeling cannot be transplanted, nor reproduced elsewhere. The question why, may be worthy of our thought as a study of the human heart.

You will suggest, perhaps, the love of kindred, particularly of parents, and a variety of things pleasant, or sad, or both, to remember, in explanation of the matter; and these may all be concerned in it. But no number of particulars which any memory can furnish, will be all the data we want. Our whole young life, with all that pertained or happened to it, comes into the account. Richter observes that "every first thing continues forever with the child: the first color, the first music, the first flower, paints the foreground of his life." And all our first things happen to us in the home of our childhood. Many of them are too early for the memory to retain, but not too early to affect, permanently, our feeling. The curtained room, the gentle steps and voices, the cradle, the lullaby, the sweet sleeps and wakings,—of these our memory tells us nothing, but they have left their hues and

pencillings on the soul—are all in “the foreground of our life;” though we cannot distinctly trace their lights and shadings there. But things enough we do remember, that tell us why we loved that early home, and why we love it still.

There is a reflection which children are too young to make, and which old people make too late. For young heads of families it is a timely one, and they cannot overestimate its consequences. If the homes of children are so endearing in their memories and affections, how desirable it is that those homes should be as happy as parental love and wisdom and filial dutifulness can make them.

XXI.

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T U R N P I K E S .





THERE came along, one day, a number of men, strangers in the place, with surveying instruments. They had a knowing look, and evidently were people of some consequence. They went through the middle of our farm, spying, measuring, and setting stakes. Who in the world were they, and what were they about? They were laying out a turnpike, the great new road, and new kind of road, of which we had heard so much lately, which was to be as straight as a bee-line, and as smooth as a floor.

After the surveyors came the appraisers, affixing values to the lands taken, — differing widely from the estimates of owners. “Why, it won’t more than pay me for the fences I’ve got to make, let alone the value of the land,” would one say; and this seemed a hardship and a wrong. “But see how it’s a going to raise the value of your property,” would some more

reasonable, or less interested person reply ; which would put your injured sense of right at ease again.

Then came the makers of the road, with their strong teams, and great ploughs, and that new thing under the sun, the ox-shovel ; also spades, picks, wheelbarrows, axes, and blasting apparatus.

And forthwith down go our fences to make way for them ; leaving the "long lot" cattle, that is, cattle whose owners kept them in the highway, to walk into our fields at will and ours to go out ; which cost an unreasonable amount of watching and running on our part to turn out the intruders and bring back the strays. They might have had the grace, if not the conscience, to stop the gaps at night, we thought ; but they were contractors by the job, and could not stay to be just.

We watched the progress of the work, but, for my part, without delight in it. They were turning smooth, green surfaces into a dirty, ragged ridge, and spoiling thus a wide strip of pasturage and mowing ; were felling fine trees, and destroying shades that the cattle loved ; were removing or defacing venerable rocks ; and

cumbering the sides of the roadway with stones, stumps and other rubbish,—were, in fine, marring the face of everything, and beautifying nothing. People said there ought to have been a provision in their charter that they should clear the sides of the road of all such encumbrances as they made, and leave it smooth and fair to the foot, and agreeable to the eye; instead of which owners in many cases had to clear a way for themselves, through the debris, into their lots. Still, the idea was dominant generally that turnpikes were a great thing, and that these people were doing a great work.

Looking back, now, upon the movement, with the excitement and talk which it occasioned, I perceive that it had one wholesome moral effect. Those were stagnant times, comparatively; there was little of a sensational kind transpiring anywhere; the newspapers were but dull; and minds were “dropping off to sleep;” but this turnpike affair comes and stirs them as a summer wind stirs the trees.

And here I will take occasion to note what no grave historian may be at the pains to record, that turnpikes were the great popular idea in the first one or two decades of this nineteenth

century, as railroads have been since; that which I have been speaking of being one of the earliest in Connecticut (chartered 1802), if not quite the earliest as well as longest. The age came in with turn-pikes,—whatever it may go out with. It was not long before we of Derwent had a second one coming in upon us at right angles with the first. They were regarded with special favor by capitalists; by men retiring from business; by prudent guardians and trustees. The funds of widows and orphans were put into their stocks as safe, permanent, and productive investments, and some affected to see in them dangerous monopolies.

But who can prophesy against the ages, and make provision for the march of things? Those enviable investments, those secure widows' and orphans' funds, those dangerous monopolies, how have they thriven? The contrary way. I suspect that about the poorest formerly well-to-do people, dependent on dividends, that the reader knows, are the largest holders of turnpike stocks. How will it be with railroads, by and bye? Who can tell?

The roads, when finished, were not as satisfactory to people as was expected. In the first

place, they were rudely and meanly done. A good deal less money than they cost, cheaply made as they were, would have sufficed to make the old highways both handsomer and better. Indeed, they were better as they were. They were harder and smoother to hoofs and to human feet, and better for wheels, also, except in places. They were more populous and sociable; and were likely long to remain so. They were more romantic and picturesque,—had more shades, and brooks, and windings, and pleasant hill tops. The contemplative man preferred them. Lovers delighted in them. The strolling moon-lit party liked them better.

I do not know who the writer of the passage I am about to quote is; but it is so true to fact and feeling, that, though the reader may have met with it elsewhere and often, I cannot forbear to grace my page with it. “I hate turnpikes with a most thorough hatred,—running, as they do, in a straight line, which every one knows is not the line of beauty, passing, as they do, through the most uninteresting part of the country, clouded with dust and business men, and infested by mile-stones and toll-gates. How much pleasanter to take the ‘*old road*,’ where

are sunshine and shade—farm-houses and milkmaids—beautiful prospects and taverns—romantic feelings and apples in abundance!”

Another cause of dissatisfaction with the turnpikes was, that they did not make adequate compensation for the damage they did to the lands and buildings. They made sad work with homes and homesteads, in some cases. It is the road that invites the house, and determines where it shall stand, and which way it shall front. Those are exceptional cases in which houses have been built in the fields, and roads made to them. But the turnpikes paid no regard to this. They passed close behind dwellings, if they pleased—pitched aside their wood piles,—spoiled their wells,—severed their out buildings from them,—went inexorably through their gardens, not even sparing the precious shrubs and flowers which the wife and daughters had so lovingly cherished. In this way they reversed the fronts of houses;—turned them hind-side-afore; or gave them two fronts, rather. I remember looking at a particular instance of this, and thinking how mortified and vexed the family must be. The house was an old one, of the lean-to fashion. Having been built on the old road, its front was toward

it, of course. That was its public side, its side "to see to," and it looked very well. The back was more humble. It was painted red, economically, as was the case with many houses at that time, their fronts and ends being white; and the lean-to roof came down quite low. Close along behind this house comes the turnpike, so near there is hardly room for the rain-water hogshead under the spout. And you can look right into the kitchen as you pass—the housewife's sanctum. This house had no back to it, now. Wedged in between two highways, it was all front, and chiefly so behind.

And then, the turnpikes barred us the use of the old roads. They did not shut them up, wholly; they could not, nor did they need to; but they ran into and usurped them in places where they chose to put their gates; so that there should be no getting round their tolls. People felt that this was a kind of robbery. The old roads had prior and primitive rights; they belonged to the whole public, and to history; and were not to be set aside thus by upstart chartered companies.

And, finally, the toll-gates. People were slow in accommodating their ideas to these. Indeed,

I doubt if they have yet done so, anywhere, fully; for in my travels about the country where the gates are still kept up, I notice that they will avail themselves of a "shun-pike," though it may be a mile or two longer, — not because they grudge the pittance of a few cents, so much, but because of the impertinence of the demand; and sometimes on account of the crustiness of the toll-taker. We had no shun-pikes in Derwent; but going to mill was toll-free by law, as was church-going, and people having occasion to pass through a gate, would manage to be going to mill at the same time.

A noted droll, an old man, would take a small bag of beans along, as if it were corn. "Beans are light to carry," he would say with a wink. He was suspected, but there was no law for searching bags for tollable articles, as there is for searching trunks for dutiable ones, at the custom-house.

To show how plain men felt and spoke, let me give, substantially, a talk among our work-people. They are taking their dinner in the fields.

"These turnpike gates!" says one. "You can't go north, nor south, nor west, but you are fetched up by them."



"A highway ought, of all things, to be free," says another.

"As free as the river is to boats and vessels," says a third. "I'm glad they can't toll-gate the river."

"I don't object to passages and fares. If a stage takes me up and carries me, or a vessel, or a ferry-boat, I am willing to pay for it, of course; but to pay for every mile my own horse draws or carries me,—shutting me off from the old road, too, and forcing me to go that way, or none,—that looks a little like extortion *I* say."

"And who wants to be stopping, in a hot day, —your horse stamping for the flies,—waiting for the keeper to come out and open the gate, or if he is nowhere around, waiting for his wife to wipe her hands and come,—till you could have got a good half mile on your way?"

"Or in the middle of a cold night," said Ephraim Bold.

"Yes; and let us hear about that, Ephraim."

"What time has't got to be?" asked Ephraim, squinting at the sun.

"Time enough, Ephraim; it an't one yet, by considerable; and you'll be shorter than a sermon."

“And shorter-faced than a preacher,” Bold replied.

“Well, I was comin’ down from Pusset—had been up there about a cow,—cold night, fust cold snap we’d had. I got to Hexam gate some’eres about twelve or one o’clock, as nigh as I could guess,—’twas late anyhow. Found the gate shet—no light—fast asleep. I tried if it would open. No; locked with a padlock. So, Hello! the gate, says I, and waited a little, No answer. Hello there, in the house. Hello, the gate. Nobody stirred. I’ll see what poundin’ ’ll do, says I. Pound, pound, pound. Click, click, I heered the steel and flint go, and out comes old Burdock with his lantern. I was glad ’twas him, and not his wife; for I’d a touch of his good-nature goin’ up. Good evenin’, if ’tan’t too late, says I. Evenin’, says he. Guess your fire ha’n’t kep’ to-night, by your havin’ to strike fire, says I. Any news, Mr. Burdock? No, says he, as short as pie-crust. Guess we’ll have a pretty smart frost to-night, says I. Guess you’d think so if you had just got out of bed, says he, shiverin’, for he wa’n’t above half dressed. What time does the moon go down? says I. Why, there it is, in the west, can’t you tell yourself?

I could if I was at home, and knew what time it riz, says I, but up here in Hexam I can't, the lay of the land is so different. If that hill would move a little to the north, I could, I guess,—all the while feelin' for my money, first in one pocket and then in another. Made a good deal of cider up here, this fall, Mr. Burdock? We've made what we've made, says he. And took it to the still mostly? says I. I thought you was in a hurry, says he. I? No, not much of a one, says I. I thought you must have been in a thunderin' hurry—somebody going for a doctor—the way you pounded and hollered, says he. I wish you *was* in one, and then you'd hurry with your toll. Keep cool, says I; I've got it for you, some'eres in these pockets; you may be sartin on't; but it takes numb fingers a good while to find things. Yes, here it is,—the ready chink, as the law directs,—holdin' out the coppers to him. He snatched it out of my hand, and gi'n the gate a swing open with spite enough to break it off the hinges. There, go 'long and be hanged to you, says he, and wanted to swear, but didn't outwardly. Why had'nt you better leave it open nights? says I. 'Twould be a savin' of tinder and brimstone to

you, and may be save you from catching a cold now and then. Well, good night, says I; for I thought I would set him a good example, and be civil to him; and started on."

XXII.

—

DERWENT CHARACTERS.



BEATTIE, in his Dissertation on Laughter and Ludicrous Composition, remarks that “ludicrous qualities are incident to men who live detached in a narrow society ;” whereas “a general acquaintance with mankind produces a facility of doing what is conformable to general manners, and wears off those improprieties and strange habits that divert by their singularity.”

There will be singular characters in any community, but you will oftenest find them in thinly-inhabited districts. In such communities there are people living in a great degree apart from the rest of mankind, in out-of-the-way places, or in little rustic neighborhoods. Living alone, they think alone ; see few books ; are conversant with few people ; are little open to the corrective observation of others ; know nothing of conventionalities, not much of fashions, manners and customs. In such seclusion,—growing up in it

from their birth,—they naturally form singular habits and ideas; they will be odd, quaint, whimsical, pedantic, or in some way unlike other people.

Yet they are not, in all cases, nor in most, disagreeable. On the contrary, they interest us. They are originals. Their odd ideas and habits, and singular modes of expression, have for us a kind of freshness, just as an antique book has. The general style of society is commonplace, monotonous, everywhere dismally alike, and consequently dull; these help to diversify it.

Derwent had its characters. I will not here call them odd, or eccentric characters; those epithets would express too much with regard to some of them; they had their notable peculiarities. A number of them may be worthy of so much room as they will occupy on these pages.

MR. WILLOWS,—“Uncle Zachary,”—was a man of medium stature, a little stooping,—round head,—jutting brows,—small twinkling eyes,—of the kindest dispositions, and of great purity of character. He was in the autumn of his days, as I remember him. His house was the last on one of the old roads; consequently it was a lonesome one; for all *last* houses are lonesome,—on



one side at least. An outside one of a village, anywhere, is not desirably located, as to its social aspects; but the last one on a public highway, with a houseless mile, or miles, beyond, has always seemed a little dismal to me. The separateness of a farm-house, a little removed from neighbors on all sides, I do not object to; that is pleasant; but to be pitched on the very edge of a town, the object of the last look of the outgoing traveller, and the first stopping-place of the vagabond coming in, is not an inviting situation.

A remarkable characteristic of Uncle Zachary was his singular calmness of temper. Nothing elated, depressed, ruffled, or in any way excited him, visibly. If a storm unroofed his barn and deluged its contents,—which actually happened,—he took it as calmly as he would a zephyr whispering at his window. How he attained to this fixed tranquillity of spirit, I am unable to say. There is a natural difference in tempers, and his may have been one of the mildest; but it may reasonably be presumed that an “even tenor” so peculiar as his, must have been in a greater or less degree the effect of discipline. Perhaps he schooled himself into it through

some theory of self-control, some notion of exemplariness, some dictate of religious faith; though there was not the least taint of fanaticism in him. Or, it may be that his wife was a nervous or a passionate woman, and there was need of an opposite manner in him to countervail her excitements. I do not know how this was, for she was gone before my memory.

His house was struck with lightning. It came down through the ceiling of the room where he was sitting, and set fire to the floor. Without leaving his chair, or laying down his pipe, he called to his daughter to bring some water and put it out. A pitcherful sufficed to do it. She then hastened to see what other mischief might have been done, and came back reporting none except that a hen and chickens had been killed outside the door.

Another of his characteristics was a kind of whiffing of his lips, a whistling whisper, it might be called, which seemed to have made itself necessary to his thinking, acting, care-taking, conversing, and whatever he did. Bid him good-morning, ask his opinion, tell him news, and he would preface his response with a *whew-cw-ff*.

You could hardly call him absent-minded;

for he would appear to keep an affair itself in mind, though at the same time he would seem to be heedless of the way he was getting on with it; and so miscarriages would happen. He had an odd, dreamy way of driving his oxen, going along some yards before them in the middle of the road, expecting them to follow, speaking to them, now and then, but hardly looking back to see if they minded him or not,—*whiffing* the while, as his habit was. His cart was a light, low-wheeled one, with a pair of oxen to match. Oxen and cart were a curiosity for size. Instead of a whip, he used a short crotched stick, the prongs a little sharpened, for a goad, as he called it.

Among the stories that used to be told of his abstractions, this was one: Coming home with a load from the woods, on reaching his house he opened the gate, walked in, and spoke to the cattle to follow. They did not follow,—had not arrived,—were not in sight. He went back along the road,—*wherev-ff-ff*,—and found them about half-way home, set in a spot of mire.

A not easily-forgotten incident of my boyhood was a ride he gave me in his little cart. I chanced to fall in with him and it, in the dusk of a summer's day, and he asked me to get in.

We were in the fields, quite away from any road. There was a large lot full of stumps for us to cross, with only a narrow, crooked wheel-track through it. As we entered on this, one of the wheels hit a stump, which scared or vexed the oxen, and, bolting from the track, they set to running, taking a random course through the stumpy field, as chance and fright, or fury, led them; and the wheels, hitting, first one and then the other, against a stump, slued the vehicle violently this way and that, like a sloop jibing in a shifting gale. The equable old man, sitting in the fore end of the cart, his feet hanging out, perilously, used such methods with his goad and voice as he and the oxen were used to; but without avail. So, handing the goad to me, he said, "Jump out, Johnny, and run ahead of them." Dropping from the cart, I did my best at running and dodging among the stumps, but fell behind, and on the fugitives went till a fence and want of breath brought them to a stand. "Whew-ew-ff," said Uncle Zachary, when I came up; "they've given us a mighty hard jolting, but nobody is hurt, and nothing broke."

He was a good man, and I always liked to hear the few remarks he would make at an evening

religious meeting,—prefaced and intermingled though they were with his characteristic *souffle*. But in his prayers there would be nothing of this, which showed a feeling too reverent to admit of such an accompaniment.

Passing around, reading old and familiar names in the Derwent burying-ground, the last time I was there, I came to the head-stone of EPHRAIM BOLD; and my spontaneous thought was, The wild ducks are the safer in the creeks and marshes while that long, sure shot-gun of his is rusting on its hooks, or has passed into less expert hands.

Ephraim Bold, or Bold Ephraim, as he was often called, from his fearless nature and the freedom of his manner, was a strongly-built, square-shouldered man, six feet and an inch or two high, and looking taller than he was from the fashion of his dress, which was always a roundabout and trowsers. You would never see him in a coat of any other fashion, even on public occasions, or at meeting. He was quite uncultivated, but was not wanting in good sense and good nature, and, in his rude way, was a humorist,—an instance of which has been given in his affair with the crusty gate-keeper.

His great delight was duck-hunting. He cared for no other game, whether furred or feathered. He cared little for any other recreation. He was always on the look-out for ducks on the wing, and in the waters; and if he saw a flock of them, it was hardly possible for him not to forego or quit work and go after them. A painted landscape in which the Little Derwent should be shown without the smoke of a gun, a flock of startled ducks rising, and the tall figure of a man stepping out from behind a bush, would, to my eye, be an incomplete picture; so often have I seen Ephraim Bold there in such circumstances. Having a wife to provide for, his ducking cost him more time than he was well able to spare. He was sensible of this, and was always glad of a rainy day as an excuse; and the rain must be a very pouring one to prevent his turning it to such an account.

A one-idea man hardly pleases us; we hate a hobby-rider; but a man who has some one exclusive bent, or passion, interests us. You would have been interested in Ephraim Bold. He enjoyed his one diversion more than many a professed devotee to pleasure enjoys his whole round of fashionable amusements. You could

not but have sympathized with him in it. You could not but have admired the sagacity, the tact, the almost instinct, as well as the zest, with which he followed it.

Bold was a ship-carpenter by trade, but he often worked for us, and was one of our best men, especially with his axe and broad-axe in the woods. He was never without a piece of chalk in his pocket, keeping all his accounts and memoranda with it, using doors, beams and pieces of boards, for his account-books. Some one asking, on a Monday morning, where one of the texts of the preceding day was, he gave the chapter and verse. "But how should you know, Ephraim? You wasn't there to hear it," said the other. "Yes, I was, and I chalked it down on my boot, because my wife won't never believe I've been to meeting, if I can't tell her where the text was."

Although he had no vices, he was not religious,—was, indeed a sad neglecter of religion. But they told me that on his dying bed he was much concerned about his salvation.

"Aged 70 years." Only seventy! The "ordinary age" of man; but one would have expected that a man of his build and constitu-

tion would have held out for more years than that.

MRS. WAKELEE was much respected and esteemed as a woman. But she was one of the greatest "drivers" in the world,—driving herself as well as her household. It was not possible that work or thought should stagnate where she was. You would think that she had everything to do, and scant time to do it in,—that the actual day was the shortest in the calendar, and that she apprehended that the night would be upon her before she was aware. In the matter of housewife industries, you might almost say she was an exaggeration of the good wife in the last chapter of Proverbs;—and those days, too, were still the days of the distaff, the spinning-wheel, the loom, the dye-tub, the leach-tub, and other like implements and means of domestic comeliness and comfort. What changes have come over us since then!

Yet Mrs. Wakelee was no scold, and I never heard that her family, or work-people, were fretted by her hurrying. On the contrary, I suspect her spirit produced its opposite in them, judging from the manner of her children, who were quite staid and deliberate.



She lived at some distance from us, and I do not recollect ever being in her company but once, though I often saw her at meeting. That once fixed her in my memory. One Saturday evening, she surprised us with a visit, having come to stay all night, and go with us to meeting on the morrow. She arrived on her feet from somewhere,—perhaps had walked all the way.

It was a rare entertainment to hear her talk, she was so spirited in it, and at the same time sensible, and original; indeed, her whole manner as a conversationalist was a novelty.

When the time for church-going came, she proposed to go on my mother's horse, rather than in the carriage. It suited the restlessness of her spirit to go in that way;—only the wonder was that she did not prefer to go on her feet for greater expedition. She mounted from the horse-block, gathered up the reins, and with a chirrup and a "terup" set off; glancing at me and saying, as she did so, "The lad must run along with me and keep up, and be there to take the jade." It was curious to see the figure she made; a tall, lean woman, arms akimbo, elbows jerking, switch in hand. I found it an impracti-

cable task to keep up with her; for Bessie appeared to understand the spirit of her rider, and went at a gait faster than her ordinary church-going one; but I did get there soon after her, out of breath, to "take the jade."

In a remote corner of the parish, "out west," there was a plain, brown, one-story house, within and around which there seemed to be an atmosphere of peculiar simplicity and contentment. It was the house of DEACON LUCAS. He was a good man, and worthy of his office. But what I have to say of him relates to his style of conversation. In almost everything he said, he would express himself in figures, deriving them from the farm and familiar scenes of nature. A writer of pastorals might have envied him his fertility in these.

I remember with interest a visit which my brother and I made him in one of our college vacations; in which he often surprised us with the shrewdness of his remarks, as well as with the quaintness of his language and manner.

Two gentlemen had been trying to bring about a reconciliation between parties that were at variance; an officious intermeddler had made mat-

ters worse. My brother and I, sitting by ourselves over the embers, at bed-time, were talking of that affair; the deacon, overhearing us in the next room, said, "Mr. *Chester*, I'll tell you one *thing*: one man will pull down rail fence faster than two can put it up." He had a way, when a thought struck him, of accenting the last syllable or word of his expression, and also the last syllable of a name, in a personal address; and this gave vivacity to his idea.

In a parish meeting there were a number of members who were all the time up on their feet, confounding, or retarding business by their ambitious, noisy talk. Deacon Lucas, getting the floor, exposed the motive of their forwardness by a single remark: "Mr. *Moderator*: we all want to drive the team." The deacon resumed his seat; the parties referred to resumed theirs.

We had a neighbor who was always prating of the inconsistencies of professors of religion, as though their failings were a sufficient justification of his own. Passing Deacon Lucas's door one morning, he stopped and began in his old strain. The deacon heard him awhile, and replied to him thus: "Mr. *Prather*! suppose there comes a snow in the night and covers the ground. The

first person that comes along the road here in the morning is a church member. You come along after him, and you see by his tracks that he has gone very crooked, straying away to one side of the patch and then to the other side, and sometimes turning back a little. Now, would you go crooked because he did,—*or would you go straight along?*”

Timothy Lux was one of that sort of Christians who, instead of esteeming others better than themselves, as Paul advises, deem it their duty to act the censor and the prompter of their brethren. There was a business meeting of the church. Timothy Lux was at the meeting, and, not seeing many of the Lakeside members there, thought he must call Deacon Lucas to account for this.

“Deacon Lucas, what are all the Christians out your way doing, that so few of ’em are here?”

“I can’t say as to all of them,” said the deacon; “some of them are planting corn, or were, when I came along.”

“Busy with their worldly affairs,” said Lux; “but are any of them alive in religion?”

“I don’t know as they are, or as religion’s alive in them,” replied the deacon, in a tone al-

most laughably deliberate and indifferent, in comparison with the sharp, quick manner of the questioner. "We live a good deal scattered out our way: we are like coals scattered all about the hearth, and scattered coals are not apt to burn."

"Yes, but human hands could get those coals together, and make 'em burn," said Lux.

"Ah, but you would want the bellows, too, the spiritual wind, to kindle 'em," the deacon replied.

"And how is it with you, Deacon Lucas; have you had any new experiences of late?"

"Nothing *to boast of*."

My father and the deacon met on Dodsley's Bridge, at a late hour, one evening, both being on horseback. They did not recognize each other till an exchange of salutations revealed them.

"Good evening," said my father, at random. "Good evening," said the deacon. "We live in a strange world. Some people's minds are like this rack of Dodsley's that hangs across the brook here. It lets all the clean, wholesome water run through, and stops all the trash. I've

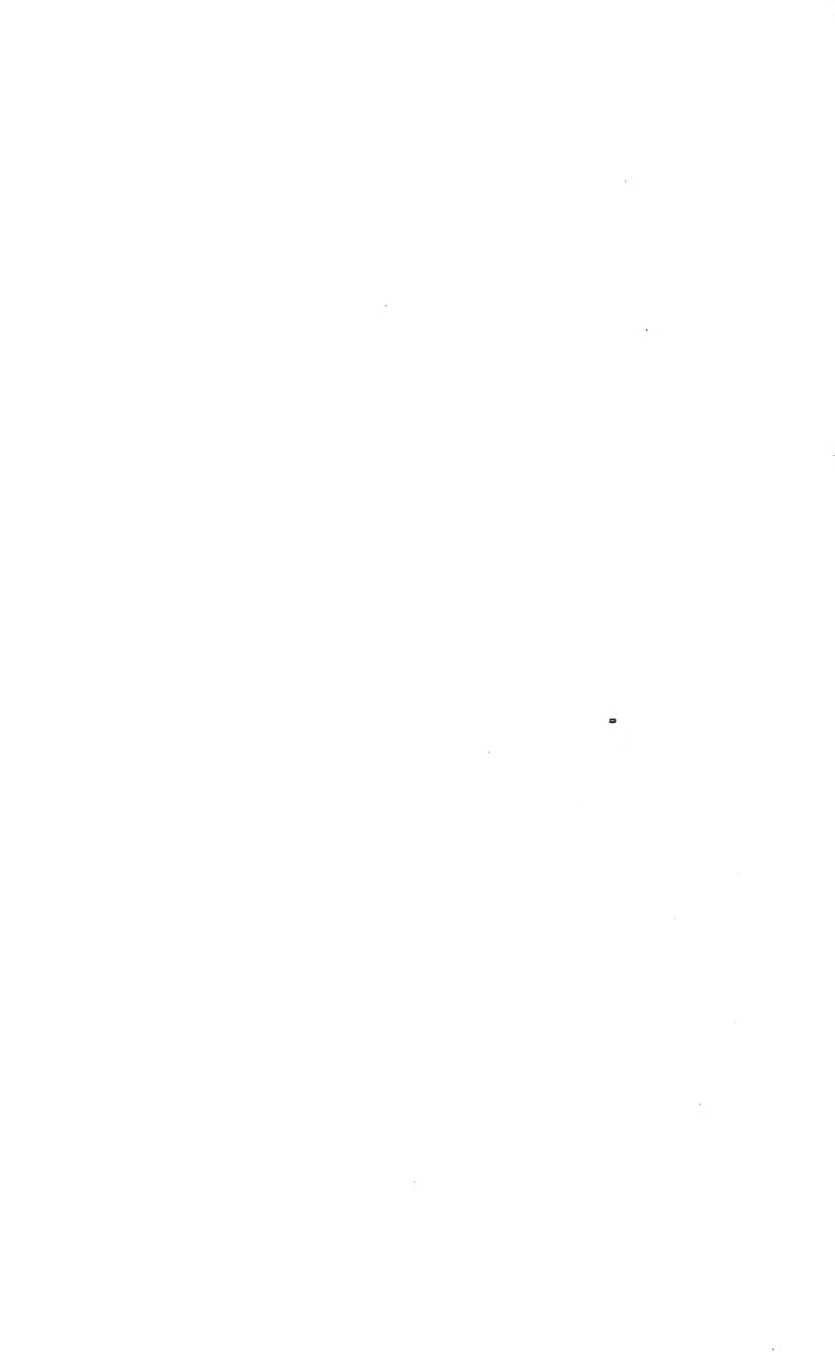
been talking with such a one this evening. Good night." And the deacon passed on. This was all that was said.

The rack referred to was a kind of hanging wicker fence suspended from a pole that spanned the brook. I often stopped, when I was a boy, to see the stuff that it arrested as it came down the stream;—leaves, sticks, scum, apples sound and rotten, and other floating things. Such strainers are some minds, the deacon said, letting pass all that is pure and wholesome, and retaining what is trivial and foul.

XXIII.



THE OLD THANKSGIVING.





WE still have our annual Thanksgiving. It is to be hoped that we may have it to the end of time; for it is a festival too precious for its uses and its memories to be discontinued. But it is not in all respects what it was.

It used to be a *State* appointment, and as such we loved and respected it. Out of New England, a festival of the kind was unknown anywhere; and in New England each State chose its own day, which was not often the same as was selected in others. Lately it has been turned into a national affair, the President, by appointment and proclamation of his own, making a common thing of it for all the States. We have no longer a Connecticut Thanksgiving, therefore; we have only a piece of a national one. But does not the Governor issue his proclamation, regularly, just as heretofore? Yes; but in the manner of a subordinate,—by high permis-

sion, as it were, the President having first sent out his,—rather than of a chief-magistrate. We have still a Thanksgiving festival, and a welcome one; but it is not the old and genuine Thanksgiving. The day has lost much of its former prestige, and interests us less, and otherwise, than it did, by reason of this national adoption and enlargement. The more limited the circle is, the more active are the sympathies within it. We might suppose an œcumenical appointment of the kind, a World's Thanksgiving, and there might be grandeur in the idea; but it is probable that families, as such, would feel little interest in it. And I suspect that New England families, and New England people, feel less interest in a United States Thanksgiving, as such, than heretofore they have felt in their own State Thanksgivings, as such. But, leaving this, we will go back now to the observance as it was.

The proclamation was read from the pulpit, as is still the custom, on the Sunday preceding the festival. It always ended with these words: "*All servile labor and vain recreation on said day are by law forbidden.*" Mark that, young people,—all play forbidden. And now the great

topic was Thanksgiving. All was talk and preparation, with some questioning of the sky, and of one another, as to the probabilities of the weather.

The day came. We were all at meeting; the pews were as full as they ordinarily were on Sundays. The proclamation was read again, with that same prohibition of "vain recreation." The services, conducted by our excellent pastor, were always strikingly appropriate. He took due notice of the reasons we had for thanksgiving of a public kind, both providential and civil; but never in such a way as to wound, politically, in the slightest degree, any reasonable hearer: in other words, his performances were marred by no party bias. Of course he adverted to blessings of a local kind, with which we had been favored as a community. His thanksgivings on behalf of families that had been particularly blessed, seemed almost as if they were expressly intended to be congratulatory of such families, while at the same time he loaded them with a sense of their obligations. And then, he was not forgetful of such as had been afflicted. With the sympathizing thoughtfulness of a friend, he remembered that there would be sor-

rowful recollections and tender feelings mingling with the greetings and festivities of the season,—that there would be vacant seats at the table and by the fireside.

About as soon as we came home from meeting, dinner was ready to be served; and we sat down to it as people do who have good health and appetites, good consciences, and good company. We should have felt that something was wanting to us, had no tables been thought of but our own. The minister had been remembered with a fat turkey; and some chickens had been killed for people, sick or poor, or both, that our mother knew of.

And now, having attended the public services, with becoming seriousness, and partaken of the bounties of a plentiful table, with thankful hearts, we young people felt inclined to fill up the day with some lively pastime; especially if we had cousins with us, or other young companions, to join us in it. But there was that formidable prohibition of “all servile labor and vain recreation,” meaning, as we understood it all work and play,—though, as to work, Betty was “sure, for her part, there was enough of that done.” That was a bar, and a damper. That made a kind of

Sunday of the day : we might not play on Sundays ; and where was the difference ? It had been twice read in our hearing from " his Excellency's " great broad sheet, which was a very grave document ; and read from the pulpit, which was a solemn place. It naturally impressed us deeply. The *law* forbade ; and we had been taught that laws must be respected. But the law, so construed, was a snare to consciences ; for it was impossible that exuberant young spirits should refrain from all mirthful play at such a time. The law itself was at fault ; it had no right to make such a prohibition. It would have been quite proper for the Governor to *recommend* abstaining from labor and amusement, without commanding, or enjoining it ; but the civil law is out of its province when it assumes either to forbid or command any observance, or mode, of a religious kind. It has nothing to do with matters of faith, or conscience, purely such, and as such. These are for the cognizance of a higher power. This is coming to be better understood than it used to be, but is still too imperfectly perceived by the generality of people.\*

\* Excuse this note in a book which makes no pretensions to

I must do our parents the justice to say, that they did not attempt to restrain us from recreation after our return from meeting, only checking us if we were too noisy. And I was glad of a remark made to us by our grandfather Chester. We had run down to see him and our grandmother after dinner; and he, seeing us more demure and self-restrained than he liked, said, "You may run about and play, children, and be as lively as you will. It is'n't children's play that the Governor means by "vain recreation," but such things as balls, horse-racing, shooting-matches, and the like. And, besides, it is man's law, philosophy or metaphysics. There are three institutions of God's appointing,—the Family, the Church, and Civil Government. The Bible recognizes these, and no others, as His. They cover the whole ground of man's social and moral interests. Each of them has its appropriate sphere, within which its action is legitimate and responsible. But, when any one of them assumes to do the work of one or both of the others, or to control, direct, or in any way meddle with them authoritatively, mischief is the consequence; as in the case of the State regulating the Church; or the Church the State; or either of these the Family. Hands off: You are out of your province here, may each of them say to the other. And it may be said further, that any popular combination—reform society, league, brotherhood, or whatever it may call itself, be it secret or open,—assuming thus to regulate, or do the work of any one of these institutions, and by means equivalent to force, or other than such as are simply suasive and moral, undertakes an unwarrantable business, and of whatever use it may be, or aim to be, will eventually work more harm than good, as results will always show.

and not God's, that says we mustn't work or play to-day ; and I don't think we are to regard it just as strictly as if God said it." Such an opinion, from such a source, was a sensible relief to us. We laughed and played the more heartily for it, and laid our heads on our pillows in greater peace at night.





XXIV.

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SATURDAY NIGHT.



SATURDAY NIGHT has a character of its own. All the other secular evenings are much alike; the interest of this is distinct and peculiar. It is to the week what the evening is to the day; with it comes release from the labors of the week. You throw down your implements, and cast aside your cares, with the feeling that they are not to be resumed in the morning. It brings you social release also; as on that evening you are conventionally excused, generally, from the receiving and the making of visits and social calls. And this is as grateful, often, as release from toil itself; for you like not only to be alone sometimes, but to feel secure of being so. You welcome that evening above others on that particular account. "I can finish this piece of work, can enjoy this book, or write this letter undisturbed," you say; "for there will be no one coming in to-night."

If you have working animals in your service,

you welcome the evening for their sake. You take off the harness, and the yoke, and say to them, There: there is nothing more for you to do, now, for the six and thirty hours to come;—recognizing in this, humanely, the spirit, as well as dutifully the letter of the injunction, Six days shalt thou do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest; that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed.

It is Saturday night in the country, and as it used to be, that I have in mind, in these remarks; they are not in all respects applicable to cities and factory towns. It is to rural homes and self-supporting families, more especially, that the evening comes in the liberating, tranquillizing way which has been mentioned.

Formerly, in New-England, the suspension of labor and worldly care was more entire and absolute than it now is, because people “kept Saturday night,” regarding it as holy time. The old Puritans of New England, and their children after them, as every one acquainted with their history and manners knows, began their Sabbath at sunset on Saturday, and ended it at the same hour on Sunday. That practice has gone into

desuetude pretty generally ; though I still hear of families that continue it ; and I always think of these, spontaneously, as good people. Without personally knowing them, I take them to be good Christians, and, like the Rechabites, respectors of the memory of their excellent ancestors.

I must take some notice of this old New England custom ; though I cannot go into the reasons of the fathers for it, fully, because it is not my purpose to theologize. They believed that the primeval Sabbath began at evening, that the evening and the morning, and not the morning and the evening, constituted that seventh day on which God rested from his work of creation and which he blessed and hallowed. And such undoubtedly, is the Mosaic account of it. The Jews, following that primeval order, began their Sabbath at evening. From these and some other scriptural and historic (Jewish) premises, they inferred the same law, or limits, for the Christian Sabbath. Much stress was laid on the practice of the Jews. But the Jews' practice was in accordance with their established mode of reckoning days. The evening and the morning made their civil day, and of course the evening and the

morning must make their Sabbath day ; otherwise it would not be the seventh day, nor any one separate and exclusive day, that they kept, but a part and patch-work of two days. And the same consideration, the relations of the holy with the secular, or civil day, would seem to be the rule for us : our mode of reckoning days being from midnight to midnight, our Sabbath must be conformable. But the Puritans did not see the matter in this light.

The Fourth Commandment itself says nothing as to the time of beginning and ending the holy day, but only says that one seventh day shall be kept, being general enough in the wording of it to admit of its being accommodated to such different divisions of time as different peoples may adopt.

The Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath, or Lord's Day, are not the same institution ; are not commemorative of the same event ; are not appointed to the same ends and uses in all respects ; and, consequently, are not necessarily subject to one and the same law. And on this head the Puritans appear to have had some mistaken ideas. They seem to have regarded the one as identical in its nature, or nearly so, with

the other, not materially differing from it except in the change of day. The Christian Sabbath was to be observed, they appear to have thought, in the same spirit, essentially, and with almost the same external strictness, as the Jewish; being in fact, just the old institution in new relations. Now, the Lord's Day is as divinely and exclusively set apart to hallowed uses, is as important to the church and the world, and as blessed in the observance of it, as was the Jewish Sabbath, but I cannot think it was intended to be kept in exactly the same spirit and outward manner; I cannot invest it with all that minuteness of circumspection, that solicitous and watchful self-restraint, and solemn staidness of countenance and demeanor, which the Levitical idea and the Puritans would seem to impose upon it. I believe it to be, in its nature and intent, a higher, freer, happier, more refreshing day.

And here let me drop a query, for over-zealous people, whether we do not crowd too many things, good things though they be, into the Lord's day, to admit of its being so much a season of *rest* as it was designed to be. Rest,—not sloth, but tranquillity for the mind and the body, and recovery

from fatigue—was a prominent idea, if not the prominent one, in the primeval Sabbath. Should the Christian Sabbath be less recuperative? But how often do we hear people say that Sunday is, for them, the most fatiguing day of the seven.

We kept Saturday night, as did our neighbors and the Derwent people generally. We were conscientious and cheerful in it; there were, however, inconveniences attending it. It was not always convenient, was sometimes impracticable, to leave an unfinished work, or business, the moment the sun went down. It was difficult to repress the outgushings of joyous young life the instant the gnomon ceased to cast its shadow on the dial-plate. "Hush! girls; be quiet, boys; you must not laugh and play, now." Saturday is always apt to seem a short day, and being made shorter than it actually was, by this curtailment of it in favor of the Sabbath, its worldly business would often out-go its allowed legitimate hours, and trench on holy time. Things would get belated. An unlucky load of wood, or hay, would come rumbling home after sunset, or after dark, even; a piece of sewing would fail of getting done by sunlight, and must be finished by candle-light, or else—it would so



happen—its owner must stay away from meeting on the morrow. Cases of conscience would often be occurring. Works of necessity and mercy were allowable; but you might have doubts whether a particular thing was one of necessity, or mercy; or, if it was, whether Providence, or your own remissness, had made it so. And different people might judge differently, in given cases; and one man's liberty might be judged of another man's conscience. There was a tradition in the place, of a certain good deacon, a man of extreme strictness, a Puritan of the Puritans, who thought it an unnecessary, and therefore a sinful work, to shave on the Sabbath; and being half through with that operation when the sun went down on a Saturday night, put away his razor, and went to meeting the next day with a muffler on his face, as if he had a toothache, or the mumps. But how could you always know when the sun did set? in a cloudy day, suppose. There is no vesper bell to tell you, and your clock, or watch, if you have one, may be out of order, or incorrect. Or a hill hides the sun's setting place. "Come, children; you, must leave off your play now, and come in, it is Saturday night." "Why, mother it is n't sun-

down yet, it is not *quite* down; for, don't you see it shines a little, just a little, on the tops of the hills there?"

But what of *Sunday* night? That, of course was secular. To sanctify the one evening was to unsanctify the other; for we are as little authorized to extend God's holy time as we are to contract it. To work, play, visit, was just as lawful on that evening as on any evening or day of the week; why not? I do not now remember that the noisier kinds of work were generally engaged in; or that the young people bounded away at once into gay company and mirth; the hallowed influence of the day, and of the sanctuary, hardly could, in a religious community, be so soon and wholly dissipated. Yet there were houses where might be heard the buzz of the spinning-wheel; some mechanics' shops would be lighted; there was a good deal of visiting, though usually in a quiet way; and not many years have gone by since town halls in certain places in New England (but not that I know of in Connecticut) were the scenes, on Sunday evenings, of very excited political assemblies and campaign meetings, good Saturday-night-keeping Christians attending them. Such things were not regarded as a

profanation of the Sabbath, that being past, though the sentiment of propriety might be hurt by them.

As for us, we spent the evening quietly with books, or sociably, with friends and neighbors dropping in upon us. But our good pastor regularly appointed a Sunday evening meeting, and we went to that generally, not forgetting to take a candle with us to help light the room.



XXV.

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THE COUNTRY SUNDAY.



IT may be the effect of early education, a prejudice (in the better sense of the word), but my feeling is, that Sunday is a pleasanter day in the country than it can be in the city. I speak of the day itself; you may hear better sermons in the city, though I shall not admit that without claiming a large percentage of exceptions. An old and shrewd judge of men and things whom I knew, used to say of popular city preachers of a certain style, that they could not “enter Freshmen” in the country; “ratan preachers,” he sometimes called them,—showy, flashy, superficial, rather than solid and instructive. You worship in more costly churches, but I suspect that generally you feel less at home in them than we do in our humbler country sanctuaries. You have gayer and more fashionably-dressed assemblies, but you do not see among them more serious, sensible, and comely faces. You go in

larger companies, but you do not, I suspect, take sweeter counsel by the way.

It is with the day, however, rather than with the services and the people, that we are here concerned. I am partial to the country Sunday, as I have said. And the partiality is a fixed one; for I have lived in cities without being cured of it. Do you ask me why? A complete answer would require graphic and minute details, if not the gift of poesy; but the grounds of my preference may be given briefly thus. The Sabbath is a day for rest and meditation, and the country is eminently favorable to the meditative habit. It is not less so in winter, perhaps, than in summer; but let us suppose, for our present purpose, a calm summer morning. Everything around you is in harmony with the day; is in Sabbath-keeping mood:—the silent, cheerful meadows,—the sleeping hills,—the glassy waters,—the trees standing motionless, like worshippers and listeners,—the quiet look of animals,—the alternating song and silence of the birds,—the faint hum of insects,—the bleat of sheep on the hill-side,—the murmurs, hardly audible, of brooks, that seem to deepen, rather than disturb, the general tranquillity. You have an open sky



above you, and a wide horizon around you. You breathe a pure and fragrant air. The scenes of Nature, God's work, and not the works and business of men, engage your senses, and fill your mind. You have a degree of freedom which the city does not afford you; you are set in a large place, comparatively. If your house is at some little distance from neighbors, you can move without being noticed, or can talk, or sing without being heard by them; nor are you disturbed by their movements and voices. You go by green highways to church,—passing, if you have far to walk, a variety of pleasing objects,—shades, gardens, crops,—on your way. I can remember nothing more charming than the orchards between us and the meeting-house were, sometimes, when they had put on their beautiful and fragrant vernal bloom between one Sunday and another. I am sure the day was the happier and hearts the better for them. And you can go as deliberately and musingly as you will, quite alone if you like, or with only your family, or a friend; for it is not a thronged pavement that you are treading.

Your city Sunday has its pleasant things, undoubtedly; but they are not of the kind which I

have mentioned. You look out on roofs and walls, with an inch of sky to see, and still less of the horizon. You go to church, in your carriage if you keep one, through streets in such condition as Saturday night may have left them; or on your feet, with the stream of the people, along ways that are verdureless and treeless,—worse than treeless, for one pities the poor things that try to take root and heart among paving-stones,—with fronts of stores and houses, basement stairways, and platforms on your one hand, and gutters on the other; with awning-posts, lamp-posts, and business signs innumerable; in all which I see nothing favorable to devotional feeling. One may dislike comparisons; but comparisons are not necessarily invidious. One can hardly express a preference in any case, without making or supposing a comparison of things. And for my part, I like to know people's preferences, and their reasons; there is always something to be gathered from them. Whether one has his home on a prairie, or among mountains, or on an island, or by the sea-side, the lake-side, or the river-side,—wherever it may be,—I like to hear from him what he finds desirable, or the contrary, in such a home. He acquaints me

thereby with facts, tastes, habits, and other profitable knowledge. So, if my city friend will tell me about his city Sundays, as frankly as I have told him about my country ones, he shall have my thanks for doing so.

It has grown, or is growing, out of fashion, even in New England, to call a house of worship a *meeting-house*; we all say *church*, now. But for my part, though I conform myself to the new way,—when I do not forget it,—I confess a partiality for the old. I was baptized in a meeting-house; our family pew was in a meeting-house; all my young ideas of public worship were conceived in an edifice known and spoken of by that appellation. For these reasons, personal and domestic, I naturally respect the name. I have a regard for it on other accounts. It belongs to the history of New England. It came in with the Puritans; and I respect their memory. I do not say it came over with them; for in England they had not been allowed to build for themselves houses of worship under any name. In adopting it, they had a precedent in apostolic usage: for the word *ecclesia*, in the New Testament, which our translators render *church*, has

precisely the same significance as our terms meeting-house and meeting. As applied to persons, it signifies an assembly, a meeting: applied to place, it designates a meeting-place—a meeting-house, if the place be a house.

The old meeting-house, together with its name, is interesting for its associations with the old social, as well as religious centres. Where it was, there used to be some of the best families; the largest and best-instructed school; the parish library; the best stores; the parade-ground; and other “court-end” things.

It is interesting for its relations with the main old roads; it marked the distances between towns and parishes, answering in some degree, the purposes of guide-posts and mile stones. “How far is it to such, and such, a meeting-house?” would the stranger ask, along his journey.

On these views of the matter my younger friends will excuse my old-time way of “going to meeting,” while they are “going to church.” In either case we are going heavenward, if we go in a right frame of mind.

Our Derwent meeting-house was, I think,

about an average specimen of such buildings of its date. It fronted, looking south, on a shaded common called The Green; on its left was a high hill, with a perpendicular face of rock; which was near enough to cast its shadow on the house through all the early morning hours. At the base of that steep of rock was the gray old school-house at which we acquired our spelling-book learning. There were a few neat dwellings around and near the Green. At its lower end, separated from it by a stone fence, was the burying-ground.

The house was a well-proportioned, comely building, not destitute of architectural ornament, but with no silly gingerbread-work, or other carpenterish nonsense about it, such as is sometimes seen on more modern country churches. It adopted the Ionic order chiefly, so far as it affected any classic style. It had a decidedly respectable look about it. And Derwent not being the central parish, the *shire-parish*, so to speak, of our broad old ten-by-twelve-mile town of Fenwick, its house of worship was never profaned by political and town meetings, with their talk and ballot-boxes, as all the old middle-parish meeting-houses were.

It had no steeple, and consequently no bell. Of the parishes around us, only one, Sussex, the next on the south, had a bell; we could just hear it on a still Sunday morning. And what a rapture it was to listen to it! This want of steeple and bell was a grave deficiency, as I used to feel. I have attached less importance to them since that time, though I would not dispense with them now. Steeples are imposing things in the eyes of children, as bells are pleasing to their ears. But people do not appear to me to walk or ride to the house of God with the deep, quiet thoughtfulness they used to feel, without the bell; they seem not to be as meditative by the way. Bells hurry and excite them; or they wait for the bell, and then hurry. Nor are assemblies any fuller for them, or more punctual. People living near the church rely on the bell-rope to let them know the hour; to tell them when it is time to be getting ready, and when to go; and they sometimes fail of being ready, in consequence. We, in default of the iron tongue, looked at the clock,—at the dial,—at the sun itself,—and were sure to be in time.

The house was seated with pews. There were no slips below, and none above except along the

front and side galleries, for the choir, and such miscellaneous people—bachelors and others,—as might choose to occupy them. Pews have a family look, and so have slips; but the pew, being square, groups the family together more. There is, however, this inconvenience in it. Some of its occupants must sit with their backs to the speaker; which is worse than riding backwards. And in prayer-time, all standing together in the middle of the pew,—for we used to stand in prayer,—we were rather huddled, if the pew was full; and if the prayer was long, the posture was wearisome, especially as we had nothing on which to lean, or bow the head; and the little folks were lost and half-smothered among the taller ones. Our pastor was never long himself, but ministers that he exchanged with, and strangers, sometimes were. This want of support and of room, was remedied in some houses,—I think in only a few of the very old ones,—by having the seats made so as to be turned up during the standing, and then let down again. But the objection to this was, that the turning up and down made too great a clattering, if not done more gently than some would be thoughtful enough to do it. The first time I

was in a house of this description, which was an old and large one in Massachusetts, the seats were let down so violently, especially in the gallery, at the conclusion of the afternoon service, that the noise startled me, as if the gallery were falling.

Our father always bid off the same pew, at the annual sale, against all competitors. "I hate this shifting about," he would say. "I like to have a home-feeling in my pew as I do in my house; which I could not have in a new one every twelvemonth."

The pulpit was an agreeable one to look at; and an agreeable one to speak from, as the style of pulpit delivery then was; as it was not of the striding-to-and-fro and air-sawing, or platform, order. It was finished underneath with a carved work of scollop-shells, by which it appeared to be supported. Over it was the canopy called the sounding-board. Whether it really helped the voice, I cannot say, but that was the idea of it. It had no visible support from above or below, but was, to all appearance, merely stuck upon the wall behind; and seemed not unlikely to come down some day upon the minister's pate, to the astonishment of everybody in the



house. It was easy for a child to imagine that; it was not easy for me not to imagine it. Nor was it impossible to fancy that the house's back must ache, holding up the heavy thing in that arms-length way so long. I wondered if it would bear my weight, if I should be put up on it. And what astonishing quantities of dust had settled on it; the "dust of ages;" which nobody could get at to brush off. In such ways would the sounding-board engage my childish thoughts at times, while some good older people slept.

That old house, made sacred to me by more and more interesting associations than any other place of worship ever can be, is still standing; but not in its proper character. They have made a town-house of it. The last time I was at Derwent, I went to see it, and was half sorry that I did. It was in good repair, and looked as much like itself as it could in another character and another dress; that is, it looked so externally; I did not care to go into it. It had been painted a cheap russet color, instead of the white it used to wear. In consequence of changes such as time and progress are everywhere making, it had ceased to be as central as it was, and a new house had been built in a dif-

ferent locality. I went to see that, too; but though it was well enough for the young people and new-comers into the place, it had for me a painfully barren, unhistoric aspect, and I regarded it without enthusiasm.

Although we kept the Sabbath with conscientious strictness, on no day were we happier in look and feeling. I ought to say, *because* we kept it so; for it is only those who half-keep it that find it irksome. And thus should it be always on a day that was made for man, and not man for it.

We were quiet in our movements; all work was suspended, except such as was strictly of necessity and mercy; worldly subjects were disallowed in conversation; our reading was Sunday reading, the Bible claiming a large place in this.

We were constant at public worship, all going when we could, shutting up the house, leaving Trooper or Splash at home; who would look after us with a wistful face that said, "I shall be lonesome while you are gone, and have a dog's welcome for you when you return."

My brother and I, and if the weather and

walking were good, our sisters, did not wish to ride; we were so much freer on our feet. And the way was pleasant, and not too long for young and active spirits. Just a mile. What lover of air and exercise, and rural scenes, would desire a shorter church-going walk than that; or would prefer wheels to feet in travelling it, especially on Sunday, when we miss our ordinary exercise? For my part, I have always felt it to be an infelicity, on several accounts, to have one's home quite near the church.

We had the road to ourselves, generally, till we came to Derwent Head, which was at half the distance. There the people would be just issuing from their houses, and we were mixed in with them. A little further on we fell in with a stream of people, Lakesiders for the most part, coming from the west; or, rather, they fell in with us, on horseback, in wagons, and on foot. Very rustic were these western folk, but honest, sensible and worthy. These, brown with dust, and embrowning us, in a dry time, swelled our company for the remainder of the way.

Before we enter the meeting-house, I propose that we cast an eye on things outside of it; we

shall observe some customs that have passed away with by-gone generations. You see fewer carriages of any description, and especially fewer handsome ones, than one sees around a country church in these times. The horses, coming together from all sides and corners of the parish, present, of course, a variety of qualities and conditions. The greater part of them have a working, week-day look, but not many have the appearance of being overworked, or otherwise ill-used. You will admire, among them, the farmer's sleek saddle-horse, that, instead of the confinement of the city stable, or any stab'e, enjoys the freedom of the fields all the green summer through, and is "good to catch." On some of the horses you will see side-saddles; whereby you understand that it is customary for ladies to come to church on horseback, without the long skirts that now embarrass, more than they grace, the wearer. Were the grandmothers less modest than the granddaughters are; or shall the long ground-sweeping garments of the latter be regarded only as one of the ordinary whimsies of fashion? A pillion would be a curiosity now, and a lady seated on one of those airy and unstable cushions, behind her husband or other

male relative, or friend, her arm around his waist, on a Sunday, or even a week-day, would attract more attention than might be agreeable to her. This, however, was but a common thing in those days. Rustic girls went to balls with their partners in such a fashion. In this connection you will notice the horse-block. Almost every dwelling-house had one, and the meeting-house as well. It was literally a block, in most cases, being sawed from the butt of a great tree, and set on end like an anvil block.

Our meetings were generally full and attentive; which is evidence that the services were interesting. Our pastor, Mr. Belden, of long continuance with us, though not an orator, was a good man, which is better. Goodness is eloquent. His people loved him. Children loved him, and *their* love is one of the best evidences a minister can have of his fitness for his calling.

The choir was numerous, and was, I think, as good as the average of country choirs. The greater part of the singers were good ones in the rough; to whom nature had given the voice, and perhaps the soul for melody; but art had not polished and refined them. But on the other

hand, art had not spoiled them. They were often reinforced by young recruits from a winter evening singing-school. Very rarely is a sweeter voice heard than that of Emily Belden of the treble, a daughter of the minister. Her sister Anna sung counter, as the alto was called, no less sweetly. And to me that part was, and is, the most charming of the four. It is such a modest, unambitious thing, feeling its way along the common path, the stave, through such openings as the other parts have left it. A gentleman, who was our guest over a Sunday, said to us, after meeting, "I did not know which most to admire to-day, your very fine treble, or your tremendous tenor." He had reference in this to Miss Belden, and to Captain Briggs of the tenor. Capt. Briggs was a remarkable singer, certainly. Enthusiastic in whatever engaged him at all, he was especially so in psalmody. He had passed his early days on the sea, and he sang as though he had practiced with the winds, as they played with the rigging of his vessel, making harp-strings of stays and halyards. He delighted in fugues, or "fuging tunes," as people called them; which were quite in vogue for a time. It was curious to see how eagerly he would stand

watching the course of the fugue till it got round to him, and then with what ardor he would fall into it. He seemed to me like a man on the edge of a wharf, ready to throw a rope to a boat, and jump into it, as wind and tide swept it past his standing-place. Captain Ben, as he was familiarly called, was far from perfect in his orthoepy. His pronunciation of some words was shocking, "Rej'ice aloud, ye sa'nts, rej'ice." This was not Derwentian, as Captain Ben himself was not; he brought it with him from his native place, Blueberry Hill.

The "deacons' seat" was still in use at the time of these recollections. The deacons always sat in it, *ex officio*, apart from their families and the rest of mankind; albeit they had no duty to attend to there except on sacramental occasions. Devout and venerable men our two aged deacons, Smalley and Lucas, were, and one might wish he were as good as they; but it seemed an awful thing to sit there, as they did, in the shadow of the pulpit, and look so solemn.

Another old custom which had not then gone into disuse, was that of having tithing-men. They were appointed annually by the legislature, as were justices of the peace. Their duty, like

that of the proctor of an English University, was to preserve order in the church during the services. The term was vulgarly corrupted into *tidings-man*, as designating one whose business was to bear tidings of disorderly behavior in meetings to magistrates or parents. They did not, however, commonly report offenders, except in aggravated cases, but deemed it enough to rebuke them on the spot, with sharp looks, shakings, or perhaps a slight cuffing. I suspect that they provoked more disorder than they prevented, or repressed. I do not believe in the wisdom of espionage over morals, in whatever manner, place, or guise it may be exercised, whether by officials, gossips, or popular-reform societies. Always odious, it stirs up the will, provokes resentments, and sets pride at odds with conscience and duty.

It should be mentioned here, as showing the world's progress in matters of comfort, that meeting-houses were not warmed in winter. To warm them with wood fires and fire-places would have been impracticable ; and stoves, and anthracite, "black stones" as people satirically called that kind of fuel, doubting its combustibility, at first, had not come into use. Imagine, then, how



pinched and blue we were, in our pews, on a bitter cold day. And think how thin the congregation would be now, if word were sent round the parish on a winter morning, "*There will be no fire in the church to-day.*" As some small remedy for this great discomfort, foot-stoves were used. The last thing, on leaving home, was to fill the stove-pan with good live coals, sprinkling ashes over them; and these must be replaced with fresh ones at noon, either at home or at some hearth near the meeting. This stove-filling was one of the penalties of living near the meeting house. A lady told me she had counted sixteen stoves at once, at her parlor fire, waiting for their turn. These portable little furnaces were for women and girls only; it was not for us hardy men and boys to use them; though a mother's or a sister's hand did sometimes slip them under my own ice-cold shoes. And I remember these small warmers pleasantly for the use that was made of them in a neighborly way. Often they would be handed over into the next pew, where they would be welcomed with a grateful nod, or, if not needed, gratefully declined.

I have no doubt that our home habits of that day enabled us to endure those cold churches as

we could not now. With our open fire-places and large flues, we had always a free circulation of air about us ; and we slept in cold chambers. But to go now from our stove-heated and furnace-heated parlors and bedrooms, and sit a service through in a fireless church, would seriously endanger our health.

A dismissed congregation dispersing from around a church is too familiar a scene to engage the attention of grown people ; but to the young observer, to whom all scenes are studies, it presents a variety of noticeable particulars. He sees in it characters, manners, styles, tastes, conditions, with sometimes an exciting, or an amusing incident. As I pause with my pen in hand, my memory gives me instances.

There is that plain, good family, the Greys. They are getting into their unpretentious, comfortable carriage. What a sensible and cheerful look they have ! How unaffectedly and pleasantly they give and receive salutations ! They are not ambitious to attract attention, nor solicitous to avoid it ; they have no thought about that. What they are most conscious of is, that

it is the Lord's day : that they have been hearing his word, and engaged in solemn worship.

Turn from these to the Rufuses. Mr. Rufus parades his flashy, bran-new wagon and his prancing fancy horse so close before the steps that there is hardly room for people to get out. He helps his saffron-faced wife in with an air, and then his buttercup daughters ; gets in himself, cracks his long-lashed whip, and away they go, who but they ? leaving a wide wake behind them, as the sailors say.

A young woman, worthy, but of rustic breeding, and painfully bashful, whose home is in a corner, has left her horse at a fence, quite away from the house. She goes to him, pets and talks to him a little, and is answered by his glad low whinny, gets on from the fence, tucks her dress about her feet, and pulls the rein, taking care that the bulk of the people shall be well ahead of her.

A young lady differently educated springs into her saddle from the horse-block, with a score of people around her, and moves off sociably along with others that are going her way.

Once, in the midst of a number of carriages into which people were getting before the door, there

was a sorrel, bob-tailed, ugly horse, which, all of a sudden, began to fall into the most extravagant behavior, rearing and kicking. A dozen people were imperilled by him, and got out of the way as fast as they could. His owner could do nothing with him, and for his own personal safety (for the fury reared and struck at and bit him), he let him go, and away he went down the Green, kicking all the way, and staving in the wagon. The place was thick with people, and for a moment there was great anxiety on their account. "Take care! Take care, there," cried several voices unnecessarily, for the smashed and rattling wagon made noise enough to warn them. They opened to the right and left and made a wide passage for the beast. At one of the lower corners of the Green there was a pound; the gate of it was open; the horse plunged into it; the wheels, too wide for the gate-way, stuck fast there; the violence of the fetch-up cleared the horse; and there he was, self-impounded; for the wrecked wagon shut him in. "I would never take him out," exclaimed a gentleman, breaking the silence of a great sensation.

It struck my brother and me oddly one Sunday, after meeting, to see one of our "out-west" folks

going down the road, among many other home-going people, with a bridle in his hand. "What has become of your horse, Mr. Bush?" asked one of his neighbors,—calling to him from on horseback. "My horse has *gone home afoot*," he replied. The conceit of such an answer so amused us, Walter and me, that we had to turn away our faces to conceal the laugh which we could not repress. It is so easy for young people to laugh. The horse had slipped his bridle, and left it hanging on the post.



XXVI.

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THE TWO GREAT EDU-  
CATORS.





DE QUINCEY, speaking of his childhood, said, that, if he should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of his early situation, these four he would single out as chiefly worthy to be commemorated: that he lived in the country; that he lived in solitude; that his infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters, not by horrid pugilistic brothers; finally, that he and they were dutiful children of a pure, holy, and magnificent church.

This is so accordant with my own grateful retrospection that I incline to make a preface of it to this, my closing chapter. I lived in the country, but not in solitude. Our house was not a hermitage; we had neighbors near enough for most of the needs and uses of social vicinage,—near enough for mutual aid and sympathy, and friendly calls, and to save us from being lonesome,—to say nothing of our numerous and

lively work-people. At the same time, they were not inconveniently near to us; they did not cramp and straighten us for room, cast no shadows on our windows and door-stones, shut off no prospect, hid no landscape beauties from us, imposed no restraints on the freedom of our voices and movements, as neighbors necessarily do, whose eaves drop on each other's yards and gardens. For so much isolation as this, one may reasonably be thankful; but I do not call it solitude.

I had gentle sisters, and as womanly as they were gentle; if they had been less than this, they would have been unworthy of the best of mothers. I had no "horrid pugilistic brothers:" a brother I had, of noblest qualities, between whom and me there was a depth and constancy of love not often equalled in the breasts of boys. Alas! my brother—he has passed from earth since I began to write these papers, and I miss him much. Yet, though I miss, I do not mourn him; for he has gone in a ripe age, leaving an honored name behind him, and—best of all consolations for survivors—has gone with an unclouded hope of heaven.

De Quincey was thankful that he passed his

young life in the country. I presume that every country-born and country-bred man who has seen much of the world, or has done, or been, much in it, and has reflected on the circumstances which form characters and men, is thankful for such a providence in his own case.

The reasons for such thankfulness are more and deeper than can be set down in a few brief paragraphs; but let me advert to a comprehensive and very significant fact, in reference to the subject. How is it that the great majority of leading minds in the world have ever been of country origin? Look through all classes of men, and you will find, generally, that those who have done the best in their professions and pursuits are men whose birth and early training were in the country; and, not unfrequently, in districts extremely rural; in solitudes, even, as De Quincey says, was his case. If any one thinks that I am dealing in wholesale hazardous assertion here, let him make for us his own list of able and successful men,—jurists, statesmen, scholars, authors, merchants, soldiers, and others,—and tell us whence they came. Where and what were they in their boyhood? Of course the city has its distinguished and successful sons, but the

preponderance is, by great odds, in favor of the country.

The truth is, the country and the city educate their children differently. By education I mean here, not that which we get from schools and teachers, and which is not so properly called education as instruction; this may be the same in both. I mean that which comes from circumstances,—from nature, providence, firesides, manners, customs; in short, from natural and social influences generally.

The ends of education are physical, mental, and moral. With reference to these, let us look at the circumstances of the country-born and country-bred child, and at those of the child born and brought up in the city.

The city-born, looking out from his nurse's, or his mother's arms, sees such objects as a window in the city opens to him; and that is his first vision of *his* outer world. It is a world of walls and roofs, pavements, gutters, awnings, goods, all sorts of vehicles, all sorts of people, all sorts of city noises, and city smells; with some streaks and spots of sky. A different situation from this is that in which is cast the lot of his young contemporary of the country; who, from

his birth, has a green world around, and an open heaven above him, and is conversant with rural scenes and industries.

The out-door freedom which the country child enjoys is a great thing for him. I pity a confined child, pining at a window, or wearing away the tedious hours with insipid toys and pictures,—as so many are doing in close and crowded towns. The country child has room to range about, to run, and jump, and look; and that without the vexatious restraints of servant or nurse. Hireling nurses, at the present day, are the plagues and pests of children, especially of boys. Where are the mothers? It was not so two generations since.

In one of the streets of a neighboring town the other day, I was overtaken and passed by a fine little fellow running with his might. “I’ve got out!” he shouted, to me, a perfect stranger to him, as he ran. “Got out of what?” I asked. “Out of the gate,” he said, without slackening his pace or turning his head. It is so delightful to all young things to be at large and free.

This out-door freedom in infancy and early childhood, is not merely pleasant to the child, but is important to him in several educational

respects: it concerns the health, temper, and efficiency of the future man.

The young life of the country, all the way up from infancy, tends to the formation of healthy constitutions and manly habits. Its active sports, such as ball-playing, bathing, boating, nutting, gunning, skating, and the like, have that effect. There is nothing invidious in this. The young men and boys of the city are just as much inclined, naturally, to athletic and manly exercises, as are those of the country, and would do the same things in the same circumstances. Manly feelings and manly ways are the natural and normal ones of boys, as womanly ways and feelings are of girls; but the city is not the place for their development.

It has not the means for it. The city, with its wealth, can do many things: it can lay out parks; make great reservoirs; build gymnasia: but it cannot make boys' ball grounds of its paved streets; nor buy, for boys to swim in, these great baths, our lakes, ponds, and rivers; nor give them to breathe the pure smokeless air of these our open blue heavens; nor our landscapes to see; nor our wilds to ramble in.

The young life of the country is not all a pas-

time : there is work, as well as play, both for the mind and for the hands. Boys are sent to school in winter ; but in summer, as soon as they are old enough, they are put to some kind of manual labor. The farmer's sons work on the farm ; the merchant's, mechanic's, and other landless men's sons, all find something to do. There are few who are not early inured to work of some kind,—to toil and the bread-earning sweat of the brow. And this is a discipline of the highest importance to the future man in a business point of view, to say nothing of its concern with his morals. Whatever be the calling he may adopt, whether of the hands or of the mind, or wherever he may prosecute it, he will bring to it this one essential qualification, that he does at least know what it is to work, and will be no drone in it. And to this consideration you may add another ; especially if he is brought up on a farm. In his boyhood, while at work along with older hands, he is acquiring a knowledge of common men and things ; the kind of knowledge which, like common sense, so many people particularly want. It is safe to hold that no one knows common men at all well and thoroughly, who has not mixed with them more or less in their labors.

The country has its advantages for the intellectual and the moral education, as well as for the physical ; these all going on together. It is the place for reading and thinking. Your spare hours, particularly your winter fireside hours, are not continually broken in upon by frivolous calls and conversations. You are secure of your seclusion ; and the feeling of security is almost as essential to the enjoyment of one's books, thoughts, and pen, as is seclusion itself. You are not tempted to waste your evenings at places of fashionable amusement, nor to pass them in gay festivities, that fatigue and dissipate, rather than refresh, or in any way profit, either the body or the mind. If you do not read and think more in the country than you would, or well could, in the city, the fault is your own. And it is reading, thinking, and observation, that make the man. He may, without these habits, pull a rope, or turn a crank, but he is not competent to direct a movement.

The country is itself a great book for study. It is everywhere open, fresh, suggestive, and instructive. It never tires. There are books which we are glad to get through with and close : the book of nature is not one of these. It



has no dull pages. Nor is there any last leaf to it, to which one may come and say, there is the end: I have read it all, and may shut the volume. We cannot exhaust the studies that are open to us in earth and sky. The clouds alone, with their endless sublimities and beauties, have something new to show us every day. If, then, you have but the ordinary capacities and sensibilities of our common human nature, it is not possible that you should grow up from your childhood amid the scenes which surround you in the country, without learning much that you would never learn at all elsewhere, nor fully in any circumstances, after the period of your childhood and youth. It is true that all the kinds of information you may get in this way may be material, simply and directly, to the business you propose to follow; yet no knowledge is valueless to the man, as such; and it is the man that directs and shapes the business.

It is to the country that the poet and the painter go for their images and colors; and though you may be neither painter nor poet, yet, living in their world, with a perceptive, open eye, it is but a natural, not to say a necessary consequence, that some part of the poet's images

and the painter's colors should come to belong to your mental furniture, and give to your mind an interest which would else be wanting to it.

In the various ways which have now been indicated, the country brings up its youth with advantages which the city does not and cannot give. Add to these another, of a moral kind. It brings them up plainer,—forms them to simpler manners, habits and ideas,—inculcates in them truer views of character and of living. The well-trained young man of the country believes that character is a distinct thing from cloth—that it does not depend on the fineness of a coat. He deprecates expensiveness and luxury. He is not ashamed to be economical. He will start poor in the world, if he must, and will work his way up to competence and a position among men by force of his own industry, integrity, and talents. If the patronage of wealth, or influence, is offered him, he will avail himself of it; if not offered, he will get along without it. And he will choose a wife—when he comes to that—of the same sensible and practical ideas as his own. And theirs will be a love such as outlives the honey-moon—founded on harmony of views and sentiments, and sustained by mutual helpfulness.

I know, indeed, that too many of our young men going from the country into the city, are poor exemplars of what I have been saying. They fall into expensive habits ; they dress and live beyond their means, and think they must, if they would be respected. Very likely they are ashamed to have it known that they are from the country, especially if they come from some obscure town. Poor, weak youths ! the country, that you are ashamed of, is ashamed of you. Yours are not the strong characters that are fitted to success, either in the city or out of it.

I think that the reasons which have been given, are sufficient to show why so large a proportion of the class of successful and distinguished men are found to have been born and brought up in the country ; and that they justify any one's thanks for such a birth and breeding, if Providence has so cast his early lot.

There are thousands of young men going for places and employment from the country to the city, all the while ; sometimes villages are thus left almost destitute of them. There would be no help for this, if help were desirable. On a large view of things it is well ; for so the coun-

try is continually supplying freshness and vigor to the city. As it regards the young men themselves, individually, it is in many cases the best thing for them, as the event proves; while in many others it is the worst.

In these sketches of young life in the country, I have had the farm in view chiefly, and before I dismiss them I have a few things to say in behalf of that kind of life for young men.

I would say to any young friend of mine, If you have been bred a farmer, and if you own a farm, or are likely soon to own one by inheritance or gift, or have means to buy one, do not lightly turn your back upon it for any chance that the city may hold out to you. With the exception of the student-life, in one or another of its forms, professional and literary, if even that be an exception,—as, with proper gifts for it, it may be for usefulness, but not for ease,—I know of no more eligible occupation than that of the farmer; and this is a judgment founded on a long observation of pursuits and results. The reasons for it might fill a volume: I will indicate a few of them.

The farmer's is acknowledged to be the most

healthful of all occupations. A good appetite sweet sleep, and cheerful spirits, are its special gifts. There is none more healthful for the mind, or which allows you equal freedom for its cultivation and improvement. You are free for this, not only when work is done, but while at work. You can think at the plough, and meditate in the fields, as the merchant among his goods, customers and ledgers, or the mechanic with his tools, hardly can. Such a life is the freest from anxiety and care: you can lie down at night feeling that your crops are growing while you sleep, and that your market is sure, be the times what they may. It is the most certainly remunerative: for, though some other business may seem to promise you greater, or more speedy riches,—supposing riches to be the main thing to live for,—yet, along with that promise, it subjects you to chances of reverse and failure. It is not so with the farm. The financial crises and convulsions that so often and so rudely strike down and annihilate other fortunes, cannot sweep away your land. You have a stable home on it, and, are sure of present competence and comfort, if nothing more; and with that, if you have Agur's wisdom, you will be satisfied. But you have

more than that: your farm, well managed, admits of a steady, though not rapid thrift, that promises to satisfy the exigencies of the future. There is no truer independence than that of the husbandman. You have scope for the exercise of taste. A well-tilled farm is a pleasing object; and there is no end to the beauties it may be made to assume. In this idea of it I include a neat, though unambitious dwelling, a garden, flowers, fruits, and many things which young hands should delight to cultivate.

But here let us ask what is the true idea of the farmer, regarded as a man. There are men, unwashed, unshaven, unmannered, who, because they own land and work on it, call themselves farmers, and pass for such; but these are no more true representatives of the agricultural class than the dirty small shopman is the beau-ideal of the merchant. The true husbandman is a man of cultivated mind and gentlemanly deportment. There is nothing in his business to make him less than this, and less than this he ought not to allow himself to be.

One thing more. Among your fond dreams there comes the thought of wife and children; and where can a young family be more favorably

trained to virtue, health, and happiness, than in their own loved home upon the farm?

But I remind myself that it is to young men that I am talking here, and that, where pursuits for life are in question, advice to them generally amounts to little. They will follow their own predilections in such matters. Doubtless that is best; the hand of God is in it; for so all employments, even the hardest, and the roughest, and the humblest, find willing hands to take them, and the world goes on.





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